# THE COMMONWEAL

*A Weekly Review of Literature, The Arts and Public Affairs*

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# THE CARDINAL'S CRUSADE

THE ACTION taken by Cardinal Hayes in New York in proclaiming a crusade for Christian decency in regard to reading, as part of the general program of the Catholic hierarchy of the United States to promote the Catholic press, is fundamentally important not only for Catholics but for the nation as a whole. For the Cardinal points out an evil which, if not corrected, is so deadly in its effects as to threaten the welfare of the people even more than the economic and political maladjustments and disasters which threaten the whole fabric of our civilization. For these latter problems and troubles may be met courageously and dealt with firmly and wisely if the moral health of the people is sound, but if not, then there must come a complete collapse of the entire organism.

"Sad to say," the Cardinal states, in the letter to his clergy which was read at all the Masses in the churches of the archdiocese on February 4, "much of our general literature has of late degenerated swiftly and terribly. The low condition to which is has fallen is evident. The country is deluged with obscene and immoral publications. Not only news agencies and newsdealers, but drug stores, department stores and lending libraries have combined to flood the land with foul and vicious reading matter. Some hitherto reputable publishers have surrendered their ethical principles and are engaged in an unholy rivalry with the purveyors of pornography. And not a few of even the best secular newspapers now display advertisements of obviously nasty books."

In regard to the latter points in this paragraph of the Cardinal's message, namely, the degeneration of certain publishing houses into the ranks of the smut merchants, and the willingness of even the best secular newspapers to advertise smut, it may be remarked that the Cardinal put the case very mildly. Anyone whose business it is to keep in touch with conditions in the publishing field, and the general press, can testify to the catastrophic changes for the worse which have taken place in recent years. It is not merely a case of greater liberalism, as it is glibly and rather vaguely phrased, in the publication, and the advertising, and the reviewing, and often the concerted log-rolling, of books asserted to be works


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of creative art in which subjects and language once taboo in the respectable press are taken for granted, and promoted. If this were all, it might be plausibly argued that excesses in this field, while regrettable, were only natural reactions from the previous restrictions of an ultra-puritanical and pharisaical era, and would quickly die out and be forgotten. But the flooding forth of outright erotica, of unabashed and flagrant pornography, from the presses of hitherto respectable publishers, and their bold advertising even in the best of our newspapers, and their frank promotion by reviewers, are ample proofs of the Cardinal's statements. All that had restrained such publishers and far too many of the secular newspapers and magazines from profiteering in filth had been mere conventionalism. When the conventions of decency do not rest upon moral principles, but are a mere survival of a period when moral principles are honestly accepted, then the flood-gates of paganism are open—as they are today.

"This formidable evil," the Cardinal says, "it seems, cannot be remedied by law. Existing legislation is lax, enforcement is loose, and the public conscience is apathetic. Therefore, the time has come to take strong measures for safeguarding the morals of our people. And there is reason to hope that we shall be joined by all men and women of good-will, who, though not of our faith, are alarmed and scandalized by this ever-rising tide of literary filth."

To give effect to his words, the Cardinal called upon the clergy of his diocese to preach the crusade of decency; to encourage the wide use of the *Book Survey* (published quarterly at 23 East 51st Street, New York), which gives a list of good books published during each three-month period; to cooperate with various Catholic organizations enlisted for the crusade; to form study clubs and reading circles in all parishes, and to set up book racks in churches and libraries, in schools and parish halls, and, finally, that the Catholic people of the archdiocese be called upon to "pledge themselves not to buy or read anything that offends against decency or that is obnoxious to the enlightened Catholic conscience."

It is obvious that such a program calls for far more than a spasmodic burst of zeal during a single month, even when that month is dedicated to the interests of the Catholic press. It must continue, steadily, persistently, thoroughly, month after month, and year after year. The movement should become the particular purpose of some central organization that will give the clergy support and which will include as many leaders of the laity as can be reached. To our minds, it would seem that here is a great opportunity for the Catholic Summer School. To its sessions come a large number of just the sort of influential people who could make of the Cardinal's crusade a continuing and well-planned movement, cooperating with and under the direction of ecclesiastical authority, yet reaching circles which the clergy cannot reach so directly and effectively. Possibly, the Summer School might bring together for at least a week of conference and study the leaders of all the lay organizations of the archdiocese, and leaders from similar organizations in other dioceses, in order to draw up a well-considered program of permanent action. The evil now upon us is the result of a long period of neglect and indifference. To combat it, still more to conquer it, will require efforts extending over many years. But now that the call to the crusade has gone out, surely the forces of Catholic Action will take the field—and keep it till the fight is won.

## WEEK BY WEEK

### Trouble in Austria

AS WE write, civil war is in progress throughout most of the industrial regions of Austria. The great workers' residential district built and maintained by Socialistic Vienna as the model plant of its kind in all the world has been the scene of bloody fighting. According to dispatches to the American press, women and children have been among the victims, while thousands of men resisted behind barricades the assaults launched by the army. It is far too early to comment on these events, or on the immediate implications to be discerned in them. Perhaps one can, however, venture a few interpretive remarks on the situation as a whole and on the purposes which seemingly actuate the government. Armed conflict between the Socialists and other Austrian parties is not a new thing. Some years ago Vienna was a battlefield on which Monsignor Seipel deployed the Heimwehr against a dictatorial threat from the Left. Then, however, the problem was handled with a tact the like of which appears not to distinguish the actions of the Fascist elements of today. Now the first of the major difficulties which Dr. Dollfuss's government must face—i. e., the repudiation of a Marxism which the nation as a whole is economically and psychologically unable to support—has led to a seeming capitulation to dictatorial violence. It is difficult to imagine any outcome now other than the complete triumph of an attempt to suppress Socialism by force, cost what it may in the form of popular liberties.

AUSTRIAN Socialism is many things to its enemies. First of all, it is a reminder of dark times immediately after the war, when Bolshevism was more than a threat in virtually the whole of southeastern Europe and when conservatives everywhere trembled for their lives. Anti-mo-

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narchical sentiment rendered it anathema to the respectably large group of those who retained their affection for the House of Hapsburg. Finally, as a social welfare movement in behalf of the working population, it was accused of forming a privileged caste the support of which constantly drained the national treasury and impoverished the taxpayer. Generally the Austrian talked more of these things than he did anything about them. But recent years have witnessed the rise of a younger and more violent group of young intellectuals who hate the achievements of Socialism — however genuine some of those achievements may be—on principle. These intellectuals have a set of doctrines which run from race prejudice to fanatical admiration for dictatorial methods. It is hard to see how Austria can function with or without them, but they exist and history must make the best of it. What happens in the next few weeks will be observed everywhere with the gravest interest.

**Confidence in Spain**

WHAT was described as the most severe test of the new republican government in Spain when it asked a vote of confidence in its determination to put down the class war threatened by the Socialists, resulted in a vote for the government of 235 to 54. The small minority had said that they desired further revolution, further acts of incendiarism and terrorism, at any cost. In answer to a question by Gil Robles, leader of the Catholic Popular Actionists, Señor Lerroux, leader of the present Center government in the Cortes, had declared that his government had already shown and could show again that it knew how to deal with revolutionists who plotted against the republic. This undoubtedly may be accepted, as apparently it was accepted by Señor Robles and his associates, as an approximation of the truth. The Spanish people who have wished to live in their native land under the new form of government without being threatened with violent death by violent doctrinarians who have plans for a rigid, automatic society with themselves on top regardless of the desires of those under them, and without being threatened with having their lives, if they are permitted to live, mutilated by having the institutions which they regard as the expression of their highest interests, smashed or burned, have not in fact enjoyed complete immunity. Of course the 50 complain against the 230 that it is brutal oppression for the 230 by superior numbers to prevent the 50 from wrecking and ruling. This makes the issue clearly one of morals, of what is right and what is not right, and as the 50 scorn morals as being something designed solely for their restraint—in which opinion they may be justified—the problem becomes for the nonce one of *force majeur* and Spanish people with any love for their past as well as their future may, we believe, rejoice in their own dispositions.

**How Can War Be Prevented?**

IS THERE such a thing as possible security against war? Many have tried to answer that question; some have despaired of finding any reply. In an address delivered not long ago Sir Esmé Howard, former British Ambassador to the United States, sketched a program of war prevention which seems to us the most reasonable yet advanced. He contended that a financial and economic boycott of an "aggressor nation" would be sufficient to bring any malicious belligerent to terms, since no one country is sufficiently independent of others to carry on war without help for more than a few weeks. But how could the term "aggressor" be defined? Sir Esmé suggested the following: "Any nation which, on being summoned by the other signatories of the Kellogg Pact to agree to an immediate armistice pending investigation of the causes of the dispute and their submission to arbitration or to the Hague Court for final settlement, refused to sign such an armistice or, if signed, to abide by it." In case both sides refused, both would be considered aggressors. We believe this definition to be the clearest and most practical yet advanced. The one difficulty would be the summoning. Which power would issue the request, or ought it to come from the League of Nations? In view of the hostility toward this body in countries now suspected of military designs, suggestions from Geneva would do more harm than good. The Ambassador fell back upon a suggestion originally made by Mr. Stimson, to the effect that "on the outbreak of hostilities, or even on the danger of their immediate outbreak, representatives of the powers that had adhered to the Kellogg Pact should at once meet for consultation." This again seems a very simple and practical idea. The whole plan is so good that we have commented on it previously and sincerely hope it will not be relegated to the boneyard of interesting but unheeded suggestions.

**Lourdes: Feature Story**

THE MAGAZINE *Fortune,* which has distinguished itself in a special way by the research work expended on its articles, demonstrates in its January issue what a good research job can be done with miracles. Finding its timeliness, presumably, in the canonization of Saint Bernadette, on December 8, it presents a long, carefully documented, profusely illustrated article on Lourdes, in a spirit which, though objective, is impressively respectful and open-minded. In the matter of Saint Bernadette herself, it allows the various schools of psy-

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chology their say, including, of course, that one which knows the exact name of her alleged neurosis; but so scrupulously have the histories of the cures been compiled, with emphasis upon the cases, averaging about ten annually, of "incurable" cures, and so fairly are they presented, that the whole effect of the article is definitely positive. There is full appreciation, also, of the attitude of the Church throughout Lourdes's long history—the caution with which it first resisted the claims of apparition and miracle, the care it has ever taken to direct the desires of pilgrims to spiritual instead of material favors. Of the million pilgrims who seek the shrine annually, says *Fortune*, "99 percent seek spiritual not physical aid." Not only those outside the Faith, we imagine, will find information in the paper. A thorough and factual study of the whole enthralling phenomenon of Lourdes, it will give to many a Catholic a fresh angle upon it. The periods, organization and conduct of the great national pilgrimages, which have sent some 35,000,000 pilgrims to the feet of Our Lady thus far, are given, with statistics on the very price of travel. The non-sectarian make-up and severely scientific standards of the board of examining physicians are described, as well as the work of the societies of volunteer stretcher-bearers, nurses, cleaners, cooks, who make possible the universal free care and hospitalization. The nature of a large proportion of the cures of previously certified incurables—the instantaneous loss of malignant tissue, or the instantaneous growth of healthy tissue—is explicitly stated. Finally, what many have called "the real miracle of Lourdes" is dwelt on at some length: the fact that all who seek cures, including thousands most foully and diversely infected, are immersed in the same bath, in which the water is changed but once daily; and yet there has never been a case recorded of the transmission of a disease at Lourdes.

**Film Censorship**

PERIODICALLY the mystery of film censorship comes up for consideration. The National Board of Review has its annual convention, and, reading of that fact in the newspapers, the intelligent movie addict is apt to have fruitlessly reawakened in his mind questions which he has already relegated to the realm of the unanswerable. We, for example, learning that the board's tenth yearly conference has just been held in New York, are moved to trot out some queries of our own—purely by the associative process, for we know that no acceptable reply will be forthcoming. We do not ask why, in spite of some gratifying exceptions, the general run of films is tasteless and common and imitative—for that is not the direct business of any censoring body. But we do ask what can be written in their book of rules that permits them to leave some particular offenses in the films, and not on the floor of a cutting room. Why do they permit children to be exploited in sophisticated rôles? Specifically, on what conceivable theory of taste or morals did they allow two children recently to give a rendering of a scene from "Diamond Lil," in which the chubby girl, scarcely more than a baby, with all the convolutions of hip and torso that made the original line famous, invited an equally small boy to "Come up and see me some time"? Or again, take the vitally important matter of the public's attitude to laws and law courts and law-breakers. How, specifically, did the late comedy, "Love, Honor and Oh Baby," starring two well-known players, get past the censors? In it, the cream of the jest lies in the mulcting of a rich lothario by a lawyer smart enough to cook up some piquant false testimony for the delectation of the jury, and to coach his client in perjury to support it. We have often wondered, when we see things like this, what they take out.

**For Cash Relief**

WE HAVE already commented favorably upon the suggestion made by the city's new Public Welfare Commissioner, William Hodson, that cash relief, instead of commodities only, be allowed to certain families at the discretion of the relief authorities. We take the occasion to repeat our endorsement of the idea now that Mayor La Guardia is pushing the matter at Albany with the practical request that cash relief be legalized at once by an amendment to the Wicks Act. As both the commissioner and the mayor have contended, the present system is wasteful of the time and energies of the relief agencies, for it requires that all commodity orders, which mount into the hundreds of thousands, be handled three separate times, by as many offices, to insure proper checking and auditing. They point out the even greater objection that the denial of cash relief in many cases tends to undermine the self-respect of needy families and to pauperize them. By removing the activities of planning and marketing, it lowers initiative. And the lack of money for any emergency need—for carfare or medicine, even—is a trying and frequently a deleterious experience to people who through no fault of their own have lost the security and sufficiency of being self-supporting. To us the mayor's move seems the application of genuine, imaginative charity to the difficult problem of home relief. If the cash grants are limited to those who demonstrate that they can use them properly, as he proposes, they will involve no waste; and it is easy to realize how much salutary pride and proper self-respect, now hard-driven and desperate, would be salvaged by this simple change in the relief act.

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THE BREAKDOWN in various practical affairs in our immediate times is no laughing matter and is so treated elsewhere in this issue. A curious parallel is afforded at the same time in the apparent breakdown in what may be roughly classified as the less utilitarian enterprises. We have witnessed this in art, beginning with the post-Impressionists, say—art fanciers, no doubt, would debate many of the points here from now until a year from next Christmas, so we wish to be guarded and affirm that all of this is offered as reflections rather than doctrines on art. And we have seen nature and the conventions of painting put through all the curious capers of the abstractionists. In music we have had jazz and George Anthiel, with intermediate stops. In literature, we have had a wonderful and sometimes to some of us awful variety, ranging from the approximately obscure to the finally and completely obscure. It would seem that nothing was left but silence. Gertrude Stein's name has been fighting words in the thick of all this, with those ardent admirers who have achieved no mean success and public acclaim standing defiantly on the one side armed with hard words and those who were definitely annoyed by her ranged on the other, more than passive in their contempt. To the latter, her opera which opened a week ago in New York will no doubt seem almost the last unendurable debacle.

But Is It Art?

IT IS called "Four Saints In Three Acts" and the obscurity of its book and the eccentricity of its ballet and stage directions will simply arrest many in a state of personal irritation. This perhaps will please the author as much as the amusement of those who will enjoy her art or artlessness. The latter, listening to the often poignantly melodious and rarely cacophonic music of Virgil Thomson, sung by an all Negro cast with exquisitely fine rendition that does not seek to impress by sheer brute volume, will we believe be delighted by the very abstractness of Miss Stein's part. Their personal visions, their reciprocal creativeness under the not too binding suggestions of the opera, will have an opportunity to soar. The battle over implicitness and explicitness in art could at this point rage for hours in a hundred salons and attics without any more definite conclusion that the present systems of government seem able to achieve in a world still subject to mutability and combinations. The morality of Miss Stein's opera, and we are far from believing that art can be divorced from morals, has been stated with admirable authority by The Pilgrim in the February 17 issue of *America,* in a delightfully urbane and cultivated article, marred for us only by our regret that at a rehearsal of the opera apparently The Pilgrim lost his hat.

## THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE

COMMENTING upon the recent skull crushing in Paris, Mr. Walter Lippmann says (New York *Herald Tribune,* February 8): "The outward manifestations in France today are extraordinarily similar to those which existed here twelve months ago, in England in 1931, and in many other countries in the last phase of their struggle to maintain the pre-depression gold parity of their currencies." We gather from this and the text which follows it that if the French could be induced to change their conceptions of money, social and political disturbances of the kind we have been witnessing would abate. Now of course there is no sense in denying the importance of all that is bound up with currency management. But, in view of what has been known for a long time of the French state of mind, Mr. Lippmann's remedy sounds very much like giving an elderly patient, afflicted with rheumatism and heart disease, advice to get plenty of fresh air.

The trouble is far deeper—is, as a matter of fact, a disease so characteristic of European society that even so probing an analysis as Spengler's does not reveal fully either the symptoms or the causes. For years France has been seething with dissatisfaction, little of which found expression in a controlled press and practically none of which was understood in the United States. It used to be said rather indulgently that l'Action Française was only a collection of fantastic literary critics, and that Communism was a minor by-product of certain faubourgs. But the "revolution" which has been in progress apart from these extremes is the real thing, and of it we Americans know very little. There is in progress a quest for a new order, not only of bookkeeping but of spiritual attitudes also.

Nearly a year ago, we commented on a new review—*Esprit.* This was then beginning publication as the organ of a group of young people, mostly Catholics, who were intensely dissatisfied with the world as it was then and as it is now. The attitude of these young people interested us deeply. Somewhere Mr. T. S. Eliot declares that the ideas of Shelley always seem to him those of adolescence. This disparagement may in a sense be justified; but one who makes it appears rather more open than need be to the charge of premature senility. One thing you do get in Shelley almost better than anywhere else—the idea of the long revolt carried out by successive and constantly stronger youth groups in Europe since the time that the French Revolution threatened vainly to break the stronghold of an atheistic civilization. This idea was at first vague, impractical and to a great extent wrong. Today the same adjectives may in good measure still be applied to it. But intrinsically it is the most vital idea abroad in the

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world, and a group which knew how to capture it and to tame it for use in the real history of man would be doing something of quite epochal importance.

We do not know whether *Esprit* reflects a movement destined to do the capturing and taming. But it does seem to us that these young people have unearthed a Christian sociology broad and deep enough to cope with the disease which now threatens not merely France but the whole of European society. They begin with three programmatic declarations. First, "disorder has been established," not merely in economics but in the heart of man himself, making the individual a victim of his own rapacious individualism and reducing society to the status of a dependent upon money. Politically, the two great symbols of this "disorder" are the press and the parliament, which serve to dupe the public into complacency and inertia. Second, spiritual values have been made subservient to financial interest. This statement is not intended to mean the usual platitudinous thing. It formulates the charge that those who use beautiful words like "soul" and "religion" are often doing guard duty around the money bags. Third, contemporaneous with the approach of this "disorder" to a kind of climax, one observes a normal weakening of the forces underlying modern civilization. Ideas and ideals which once possessed creative power go about garbed in old clothes which arouse the derision of the masses. Permanent values, therefore, need restatement, refurbishing, in terms of present-day needs and verities.

What interests one in all this is the fact that it is genuinely Christian. No purely mechanical device is advocated as a cure-all for ills which exist deep in the spirit of individuals and society. It cannot be repeated too frequently that the very hope for marked betterment through economic or political acts *as such* is almost a negation of religious hope. On the other hand, failure to realize that the desire for justice must make use of such facts is almost equally fallacious. The young people of *Esprit* are quick to ward off this temptation. Far from retreating to an ivory tower from which lamentations can be sent out to a world interested in good prose, they have laid siege to the tower with a great deal of verve. And if their own program is still in a few respects rather tentative, the broad outlines are visible and interesting.

The movement is first of all spiritual. That is, it posits the "conversion" of the individual from adherence to the profit motive to advocacy of the "development motive." If religion, education and other energies operative in the domain of public opinion inculcate contempt for the individual whose life has been spent amassing goods at the expense of others but at the cost of all personal growth, we shall eventually possess a curb upon predatory riches far more effective than anything to be expected from legislation, no matter how drastic. This presupposes, however, the "conversion" of religion, education and the other energies. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to preach a correct doctrine of the community.

Man's life cannot be thought of independent from groups, the most important of which is that which bands together all who labor. And while this labor is dignified and even a potential source of happiness, it is also far from being an end unto itself. "Work," we read, "is a means of getting a livelihood, and nothing else." Today this truth is more important than ever. The invention and application of machines has so reduced—or will so reduce—the time required to supply human needs that the greatest fact in every worker's life will be leisure. But before such leisure can be safeguarded and developed, the objectives and the control of industry must be altered. No one individual or controlling group can any longer hope to effect the right social organization of industry. Nor can the state. Cooperative governance of a corporative industry is the only solution to which a civilized person can look forward with any satisfaction. Economics must above all be freed from the necessity of undermining and tyrannizing over the political activities of the State.

"The State does not," we read, "possess any totalitarian power over individuals and groups. It ought merely to arouse, aid and sustain personal or collective initiative affecting the common good. While we are enemies of a parliamentarism which is abstract, incompetent and powerless to oppose reigning economic forces, we are quite as strongly opposed to Fascism and Communism which stifle man by means of economic centralization and spiritual dictatorship. We think that the problem of the relations between democracy and authority has to be thought out anew. Economic power, which is today occult and apart from the community, ought to be reintegrated with political power but at the same time remain distinct, since politics ought properly to mean the representation of all concrete interests and of all natural groups." Hand in hand with this there goes a conception of the nation as possibly local and as certainly not abstract, in itself sovereign and legitimately predatory.

Such, rather hastily and incompletely presented, are some of the ideas which govern this extraordinary review and the group which it serves. No doubt there are many in the United States—readers of French—whom such a program would interest greatly. For our part, we have read *Esprit* since its inception, and we confess it has done more than any other single thing to convince us that France is not a people of fossils, ensconced behind a Chinese wall and seated like an angry clucking hen on a nest of gold nuggets.

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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY

By CHARLES A. HART

*The Secretary of the American Catholic Philosophical Association here indicates some of the highlights of the papers read at a recent congress of Catholic philosophers meeting to consider the basic principles of human relations. Probably at no other time have there been more widespread uncertainties with regard to these relations or more different theories. The present indication of fundamental Catholic social points of view is therefore of more than passing importance.—The Editors.*

IN CHOOSING "Philosophy of Society" as the general theme of its Ninth Annual Meeting, which was held at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on December 28 and 29, 1933, with Duquesne University as the host, the members of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, through the contributors to the symposium, sought to ascertain those more fundamental aspects or basic principles of human relations which the various social sciences assume. Such a search is definitely metaphysical and indeed, in the very nature of a truly philosophical inquiry, it should be nothing less. For philosophy simply to repeat the findings of the sciences of sociology, economics and politics (to the extent that these are sciences) would be to abdicate its own proper rôle and descend to vocation of an echo. This, of course, is a constant temptation. The practical man, dealing with immediate causes, details of procedure, application of remedies seems to be much more in demand always, and never more than in this depressing present. Philosophy bakes no bread—and yet it has a contribution to make of which only philosophy is capable.

As Father LaFarge observes in explanation of the reason of his paper, "The Philosophical Basis of Communism":

> Why should Communism have a philosophical basis? Is it not merely an expression of social discontent: the rationalization, by interested leaders, of the feeling of the "outs" with regard to the "ins"? Such a question would have been more natural ten years ago than it is today. The experiences of the last few years have taught us to take more seriously, from a theoretic point of view, the aberrations of society as well as its successes. We look back to the past and see what grievous practical errors might have been avoided, how many heresies and revolutions might have been averted, if popular movements had been taken more seriously in the beginning; if their theoretical implications had been better understood and if they had been combated upon these grounds, rather than upon the grounds of mere expediency or warfare of personalities.

How well the dozen contributors succeeded in remaining true to their calling may be left to other critics than the present commentator who can hardly do more than select one or two aspects of a few of the papers for consideration within the compass of this brief essay.

With Dr. Charles C. Miltner's presidential address on the "Scope of a Realistic Philosophy of Society," designed to introduce and set the limits of the discussion, and Mrs. Clare Riedl's "Social Theory of St. Thomas Aquinas," to indicate the general spirit of the scholastic approach, the papers on the philosophies of capitalism, Communism, Fascism, and internationalism by Drs. John A. Ryan, John LaFarge, Edward Murphy and Attorney Paul Martin, respectively, fall under the subheading of "Social Forms." Under "social forces" the family, education, religion, social values, law and social reconstruction are treated by Professor Leen, Drs. George Johnson, Charles A. Hart, Leo R. Ward, Jules A. Baisnée, William T. Dillon and Father Raymond McGowan, in the order named. Finally, from the history of society, Dr. Callahan of Duquesne University attempts a philosophy of history. It is worthy of record that the neo-scholastics are just beginning to take note of the considerable recent discussion of the problem of values—especially group values—which has grown so extensively of late, under the pressure of so many disillusionments, as to constitute a new department of philosophy, under the suggested title of axiology, or theory of values. It has been rightly observed that values bear something of the same relation to the social sciences that exact quantitative standards of measurement bear to the physical sciences. It was only when the latter became a reality within recent times that real progress in the physical sciences became possible.

The broad principles of a philosophy of society from the scholastic viewpoint are implicit in a scholastic theory of being and of order, if they have not often been actually enunciated in a separate department. That theory of being is characterized by a distinction between the Infinite and the finite, to which the Infinite gives existence. A self-existent personal creator is the center of all speculation on a philosophy of society because it is the source of society's beginning and its end as well. As to the scope of such philosophy, then, as Dr. Miltner observes,

> . . . it is nothing more nor less than the successful application of the moral principles drawn from our conception of man's nature and the essential rela-

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> tionship in which he stands to the several orders of reality of which he is a part. . . . It follows then that it falls within the scope of social philosophy to consider in the light of these principles every species of action which may properly be called social, whether it bear on the fundamental right and duty of self-preservation and normal development, or the economic, political, ethical or religious welfare of individuals or groups within the social order.

And the ultimate reason of present failures, the "moral entropy," likewise gets back to the central concept according to Dr. Miltner, quoting Jacques Maritan ("Primauté du Spirituel"):

> The error of the modern world as of the modern mind has been to assert the reign of reason over nature, while refusing the accept the reign of the supernatural over reason. The right order of values has thus been entirely subverted . . . All the major crises of modern times are but the children of a lost unity of faith.

The historical development of the relation between creature and Creator in religion as the source of unity in every human culture is likewise the theme of the paper on "Religion in a Philosophy of Society." Without it, cultures such as our own tend inevitably to distintegration and decay. So, too, every phase of the social theory of Saint Thomas, as Mrs. Riedl so ably discusses it, has the relation of man to his Maker as the touchstone—the source of authority, the end of the state, and the relation of the citizen to the state. For instance, Saint Thomas says:

> A person's idea of the end of the state will depend on his idea of the end of man, for the state finds the reason for its existence in man.

Only when we understand our relations toward God, will it be possible to establish any workable relations with our fellow men who are but reflections of Him. Through such understanding alone, can we work with the natures with which we have been endowed instead of against them.

Communism, philosophically considered for example, denies transcendent Infinite Being its proper central place and attempts a thoroughgoing dialectic materialism for the guidance, the vision, of one-sixth of the inhabited globe. Yet the finite human being is by no means permitted to occupy that central place. There is no question of a humanism, a deification of human personality, but rather a destruction of all respect for it—"the denial of individual rights by those who suffered most by their deprivation." Rather, there is presupposed

> . . . an absolute evolutionary principle which is the adequate explanation of the world of human phenomena. This principle is given unqualified blind faith. From this principle is derived a certain kind of morality; party morality, it is true, but as exacting in its prescriptions and sanctions as the morality imposed by any of the great historic religions. Finally, the religion has a missionary character. . . . Lenin is fighting not only against industrial oppression, as a social philosopher; not only against political might, as an anti-czarist revolutionist, and against political seduction, as an opponent of mere humanitarianism. He is fighting against the Christian Absolute; the idea of a Transcendent God; not merely against the established Church, but against even the most inward religion of the spirit.

In view of the present vast experiment being carried on in Russia, it is interesting to consider Father LaFarge's list of points of agreement and of opposition between Communism and Christian philosophy which makes use of scholastic principles in expressing its reasoned outlook on life:

(1) Both the Christian and the Communist agree as opposed to the mere hedonist or cynical agnostic that material goods (let us waive those that are spiritual) are to be judged, not merely by their immediate pleasurableness but by the degree to which they enable us to participate in a fuller life.

(2) The Christian and Communist agree on certain *specific* goods as contributing to this fuller life; for instance, health, popular culture, literature, music, art, etc. They agree that hard work is a necessary element of life, at least here and now.

(3) They agree that exploitation is an evil. Indeed, the moral indignation which the Communist showers upon exploitation appears to us as a rather naive appropriation of a Christian moral sense; rather than as any logical development of materialism.

(4) They disagree on what this fuller life is. Why be healthy, educated? Also as to the philosophy of work or its permanence as a phase of human existence.

(5) They disagree on the ultimate reasons why such a fuller life is attainable: the Christian, because life is a gift of the Divine love for man; the Bolshevik, that man is inherently self-sufficient.

(6) They disagree on the part that society plays in the distribution of these benefits. The Christian looks upon society as organizing a harmony of human rights, correlative with human duties. The Communist looks upon the social collectivity as the absolute source of all good.

(7) They disagree on the ultimate reasons why mankind should be deprived of these goods. The Christian ascribes these phenomena to primitive moral failure or original sin, to individual moral delinquency or actual sin. The Communists look upon the deprivation merely as a phenomenon inherent in class warfare.

Capitalism and Fascism, on the other hand, in so far as they possess any philosophy at all, appear to the writers to be mere opportunism.

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Capitalism in its nearest approach to a philosophy is made synonymous with economic liberalism in the sense of a thoroughgoing *laissez-faire* policy of government in industry, unlimited competition, the natural goodness of men and their substantial equality with one another. The "invisible hand" of which Adam Smith speaks "would direct the selfish pursuit of private gain, in spite of the pursuer, in such a way as to promote the common good and the welfare of all"—all of which is utterly without foundation in reality. From the standpoint of our central concept it represents too frequently a perversion of right relation between men because it does not adhere to the relation between man and God which both reason and revelation make known. Hence, Monsignor Ryan concludes:

> The philosophy of capitalism comprises psychological, ethical, political, economic and religious elements or concepts. They are all either false, exaggerated or misleading.

It would be possible also, if space permitted, to show that such social forces as the family, education, law, religion and social values can perform their proper and fullest rôle only to the extent that they predicate a philosophy of theism. Indeed, that is the tenor of these contributions. Of education in a philosophy of society, for instance, we read:

> Of course a social philosophy of education can be valid only in the degree that it indicates a way of lessening the perennial tension between the individual and the group. Here it is of utmost importance that there be a substratum of sound metaphysics. It would seem most important at this time that we emphasize, in season and out, the teachings of Christian philosophy concerning human personality, and the origin, nature and destiny of the human soul. Greater economic equality will, without doubt, mean more contentment, more security, less fear and less suffering for the masses of mankind. But unless vigilance is exercised, it is also liable to mean more regimentation, more submersion, less freedom, less opportunity for self-development for the individual.

It is to be hoped that the papers which are to be published as a volume available to the general public, in addition to the customary *Proceedings* publication, may be of some aid to students of social sciences in the way of more fundamental thinking in the fields of their respective interests.

# THE UNION PROGRAM IS OBSOLETE

By RAWSON L. WOOD

THERE is one significant exception to the principle that underlies the many and varied activities of the new deal. Deliberate planning has replaced the automatic and uncontrollable forces that have hitherto been the regulators of our economic machinery. We have the change exemplified in the crop-quotas of the A.A.A.; in the management of the currency, and in the elimination of trade abuses through the industrial codes. Each of these fields is now subject to some sort of control, with the object of bringing us nearer that ideal of social justice toward which the President is striving and to which the *laissez-faire* system has always been indifferent. In the face of these developments it is an amazing incongruity that the wage level, perhaps the most important price index of all, has been left for determination to the buffets of a competitive labor market.

To make the contrast more vivid, let us examine for a moment the policies of the A.A.A. Its objective is to raise agricultural prices to a higher level in relation to industrial prices. Instead of allowing the farmers to throw their products on a free market and therein finding their own level, we have attempted to control supply by setting quotas on production, and on the other side of the market have stimulated demand through public purchases for relief and bargains with other nations for exports.

Certainly it is no easy task to decide how many bushels of corn or wheat should be grown, or to estimate how many acres should be planted in any given year to make the actual yield correspond with the plan. But the machinery has been set up and a start made toward doing just that. Can we not try to stabilize industrial production and employment in the same way?

Just as we no longer allow the farmer and his customer to boot the price level back and forth between them, so we are trying to eliminate fluctuations in the value of our dollar. We know that Mr. Roosevelt's purpose is to replace the old stability of the dollar in terms of gold, which few people ever buy, by stability in terms of those commodities whose prices enter into everyone's budget. The automatic adjustments that are supposed to bring about this end through correlations between the amount of gold on hand and the supply of currency and credit in use have failed, and other methods are being tried. Whether altering the metallic base of the dollar will be sufficient is a relatively minor point. If it is not we know that other steps will be taken. For the purpose of this argu-

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ment the significant conclusion is that deliberate planning is being substituted for the open market.

The same change has begun in industry under the NRA. Rival producers who formerly fought a catch-as-catch-can battle for customers, have had Marquis of Queensberry rules imposed upon them in the form of rules against rebates, secret discounts, loss leaders, etc. Even the consumer has been admitted to hearing in this undertaking, although his voice is still faint and ineffectual.

Like the other prices mentioned above, wages, or labor prices, have in the past been set by the action of a free market; in this case one in which the employer's need for men was set off against the number of workers seeking jobs. We have seen that in other fields the government has superseded this process by some sort of management and planning. But in this case the only attempt at regulation has been the fixing of minima which are expected to apply to only a small fraction of the wage-earning population. For the rest, the problem has been thrown back into the open market and left to the relative strengths of the unions and the employers to decide, with the famous clause 7a inserted to bolster up the bargaining power of the former.

There are seemingly good reasons for this procedure. Labor, unlike wheat or milk, cannot be classified into a few uniform grades for pricing purposes. Still less does it resemble the units of a currency which are identical throughout the country. This fact makes the task of planning wages vastly complex and one which it might be too hardy to attempt so early in the program.

Another reason for this incongruous situation, and one which carries more weight among those administration advisers who are sympathetic to the labor cause, is the success that strong unions have had in the past in raising the standards in their industry. Regardless of how this competitive method of determining wages fitted into a planned economy, its social gains appeared certain, if the unions could be strengthened sufficiently.

It is true that isolated unions, such as the printers, boot and shoe workers, and the railroad brotherhoods, have done much toward improving the condition of their members. If the unequal distribution of our national income which leaves most of the population in perpetual penury is admitted to be the source of our troubles, it is natural to assume that universal unionization would bring to all trades the benefits it has brought to the ones just listed, and thereby remedy the evil. The simple fact is, however, that unionization can help the worker only as long as it remains partial and incomplete. The greater success the unions have in enforcing their demands, the less will be the gains of the workers.

This statement may appear to be startling but its logic is simple. The A. F. of L. objective has always been higher wages or shorter hours or both, to the exclusion of political goals. Let us suppose now that the unions of printers, boot and shoe makers, and railway workers succeed in obtaining a wage increase of 25 percent. It is obvious that these three groups would have their purchasing power increased by a similar percentage, except when they bought printing, shoes or railway tickets, the prices of which would of course have gone up to take care of the increased cost.

But let us further assume that all 40,000,000 workers in the country received a wage increase of 25 percent. Prices of industrial products would rise by 25 percent less whatever fraction of the cost in each case happens to be covered by fixed charges such as rent and interest. Obviously no one would be much better off, and the slight gain that would result at the expense of landowners and investors would be more than offset by the chaos into which many industries would be thrown. Yet this is the logical extension of the union program, and its adoption as a satisfactory labor policy by the administration shows that the problem has not yet been thought through.

Two possible solutions present themselves. One is the strict control of prices so that wage increases were not entirely passed on but came partly out of profits. The danger here is that the profit margin might be inadvertently squeezed too fine and wholesale bankruptcies result. It would be a much less hazardous plan to tap the excess profits through taxation, instead of jeopardizing an entire industry by price control directed toward the same purpose. In other words, the union program is an unreliable weapon in the struggle for a fairer distribution of wealth, and its limitations should be clearly realized by those now sponsoring it.

## *Song for Mary Helen*

For you who have no birthday, I must fashion
A little sacred song, untouched by passion.

This is my first gift, reverently given—
(See where the nails through His sweet hands are driven)—
Receive this rood.
Your birthday cake will be the sacred wafer,
Immortal feast—O may it keep you safer
Than mortal food!
I light its candles, flames that will not perish,
Here at the feet of her whose name to cherish
I give to you;
What birthday cake is lit with candles sweeter,
What child has such a holy guest to greet her
As you, dear, do?

And last, I cross myself with holy water,
To keep me pure for you, my little daughter.

JESSIE CORRIGAN PEGIS.

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# STRIKING AN ATTITUDE

By ROBERT McDONOUGH

OF AMBITION much nonsense has been written; but much more mouthed, especially by a father whose male children threaten to waste his and their substance forever, playing games and making love during the precious years when he was suing fortune's solider favors. Boys of this day, it would appear, just don't care; nor have they any real pride, or manly relish for independence. They want "to start at the top"; they have no fondness for manual labor; and, worst of all, they seem reluctant to admit that capitalism—a system, by the way, to be thanked for the very education that gives them such a cocky vocabulary—is divinely ordained and above human tampering.

We, male and female, who graduated from college in the years after 1929, have learned fast. Events followed one another more closely than ever before; and we had the time to ponder these with the easy magnanimity that comes of having nothing to lose. We made the rounds of the usual business houses, knowing full well how quixotic it was, and even went so far as to try to get some wires pulled, searching for work through 1932. When our fathers watched closely and imagined our strivings uniformly barren, they weren't quite right: we were learning. Sometimes, naturally, bitterness would choke us, relegating classic rapes and martyrdoms to poor seconds or thirds when compared to our wretched condition; and we would hear our voices crying out against the unsocial nepotism of this employer, the bland insouciance of the other. But there were a great many dispassionate moments given us during those years; and it was then that we tried to interpret our experience. Others were living through it: our college room-mate, two-hundred miles away, had something to write to us; so had Archibald MacLeish and Walter Lippmann, Leon Trotzky and Father Gillis. We have lived intensely in the spirit in the months since commencement. No matter how hard we tried to forget by means of the multiple diversions at hand, the essential aimlessness and hopelessness of our positions could not so easily be downed: a man carrying the corpse of his first-born in a shoe-box is not noticeably distracted by the antics of an Italian's monkey.

What are the results of all this cogitating, pondering? Really, not very much. In so far as I am to be permitted to emulate Mr. Hemingway and speak for a generation, I shall try to outline a few of them.

This essay began to speak of ambition. Has his experience in the years just past brought about a change in the character of youth's lust for power? Or rather—as his father is inclined to think—has the hurling of an already none-too-sound head against the stone wall of the capitalist structure dizzied the member, bringing on a general inertia and, worse still, cynicism? Is his attitude one manifesting nothing, alas, but racial decadence? These can be best answered by presenting the attitude in full detail. (This I shall not do: if I were an oracle, I should go into vaudeville, leaving the essay to less blithe spirits.)

Youth is, I think, less gullible than ever before. Which is to say, to be cheaply paradoxical, the young are older. I am not at all likely to take at his word the philosopher who would persuade me that a social system which supports him and his employers nicely is necessarily a nice system; my brother, who graduated in 1922, did and probably does. But then, Mr. Edmund Wilson will never be to me the splendid knight that Jack Reed was to my young uncle in 1919. To none but the foolish is the Communist utopia wholly unattractive; but he certainly is a fool who without having pondered the matter deeply would urge an early exchange of the certain holocaust that would attend such a sweeping social shift for the attractive furniture of the Communist heaven. Youth, therefore, sees reason for hesitation. This, of course, presupposing that somehow the Marxian apologists could satisfy us that theirs is a system theoretically sound and practically possible. Mr. John Strachey is not so unconvincing as he might be; but neither is this a campus debating society.

The post-war record of the British Socialists, and that of our much more futilely diffuse band of reformers and revolutionaries, is not one to hearten those of us who have decided that life under the present dispensation can grow tolerable only as our embarrassing predilection for social justice is corrupted and generally bought out by the shoddy but real enticements of bourgeois living. Indeed, Europe's more recent political history has sent some of us down on our knees to pray for a continuation of the status quo, shoddiness and all, rather than risk the emergence of a capitalist horror so dreamlike as to have been unforeseen by the almost clairvoyant Marx and Engels, the Revolution of the Right. The obvious fact that careless revolutionary talk breeds Fascists more prolifically than International Socialists has been an important dissuasion to our wholehearted support of "Youth Movements," of whatever shade of red. Being painfully introspective, we know more of our limitations than is good for us. Rather than dive into fetid pools searching

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for something for which we have only the vague description furnished by wishful thinking, we prefer, it seems to me, to let the others, the more likely to know what they are after, do the groping. And there is not a Randolph Bourne in sight. Most of us feel, being lightly romantic, that if one vote or one oration or one tremendous self-sacrifice of ours would make the great inarticulate masses articulate for five minutes, no herd of wild horses could hold us back. However, we have too much of the blood of Sancho to believe that such an eventuality will arise.

Youth, therefore, is becoming realistic. Some, of course, would say cynical; others might be unkinder still and call us fatalists, defeatists.

Then, too, there is that new attitude of ours toward the average business career: we are reluctant to start from that formerly most august *terminus a quo,* to wit, the bottom. Of course, persuaded as a great number of us are by hunger and frayed trouser cuffs, we do very often accept (nay, jump at) a position at the bottom of the industrial pyramid; but not all of us do this firmly convinced that no agency but fire, pestilence and famine could conceivably stay us in our climb to power, glory and first folios. It is not only because we have had the closing of the frontier and the restriction of immigration pointed out to us: the past few years have painfully brought home to us in what manner the comfortable apartments in the capitalist state are allotted. The simple fact is: we cannot any longer sweep basements hopefully.

Then there is the question of manual labor. (Why there should be a question of manual labor comes nearer being the question, I am inclined to think.) Why the more enlightened members of the population should be forced, not caring particularly for starvation, to divide their waking hours into alternate periods of dismal, uncreative effort and muscular collapse, especially in this day when the variety and potency of available mechanical slaves is enough to stagger the bravest of observers—but this is not only a priggish but also an inaccurate way of posing the question. It is obvious to anyone who has looked for work that manual labor is as difficult to obtain as any of the politer varieties; and book-keeping is hardly something to warm the heart of a William Morris. Yet, a great number of us have, in recent months, been imaginatively represented as beggars on horseback. Perhaps we are: certainly we have shown some preference for positions which, while humdrum in themselves, pay fairly well and leave us something wherewith to live a bit humanely after working hours.

Whether the strictures of those who predicate false pride in those of us who consider tossing the manual labor bone insulting and degrading are manifestations of an unwillingness to cope intelligently with a difficult situation or not, we find in our hearts that the only sensible stand for us is to refuse to take them seriously. So long as there are midgets in the seats of the mighty we will consider it our duty to society to try to humiliate them; and we will not be sidetracked in our endeavors by the empty words of those who underestimate us so much.

I think that I have summarized youth's attitude with a fair degree of thoroughness. It is true that what I have stressed are essentially negative states of mind; and it must be obvious to everyone that no description of the young could have objective validity on that basis. When, however, one looks around, notebook in hand, for evidences of youth's positive program, one discovers a united front on nothing more philosophical than an admiration for Miss Jean Harlow and Mr. Charles Laughton: there are as many plans of action as types of young mind. (Several of my friends are earning their Fascist castor oil by unofficially representing the Comintern hereabouts; another found a Benedictine vow of stability the only solution.) But the greatest number are, I think, simply trying to hold their own; they are striving to avoid dreams that are too inflammatory and diversions that provide too cowardly an escape. And the optimist is the exception among them.

So here we are, waiting. According to Mr. Howard Brubaker, our favorite bit of literary charm is the "If" of Mr. Kipling. Some of us have waited long enough and are already being absorbed into an almost perceptibly reviving world; others feel that Lazarus's surprise is never to be theirs and have tried to make the tomb as comfortable as possible with the material at hand. The wisest, in my really worthless opinion, are those who realize that life, by and large, has always been this way, will always be this way, and have consequently ceased to center their hopes on this globule of incandescent mud. And they, unlike me, try silence when the efficacy of noise is open to question.

## *Lent*

Close thine eyes and rest
A moment, soul of mine,
Remember what thou art
And where.

On God's eternal breast,
On boundless love divine,
Repose, my restless heart,
Thy care.

Then by His sorrow blest
Thou shalt no more repine,
But choose the better part
To share.

ELEANORA C. SKINNER.

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# INTERNATIONAL PACIFISM

By JEAN BURTON

PACIFISTS, taking them by and large, are an earnest and high-minded lot, far too intelligent not to realize that they are fighting against odds, against time, and against the grain of human nature. It would seem unreasonable in the public to resent efforts to save it from what will undeniably be a very unpleasant experience when next it recurs; but there it is. Nevertheless, since some are still desirous of avoiding that experience whether others choose to let themselves in for it or not, it is a pity that pacifists make their cause quite unnecessarily unpopular.

In the first place it is faulty psychology for them to harp, as they continually do, on the probable total destruction of civilization in the next war. A cataclysm on such a scale as that is an exciting and bracing thing to contemplate and the prospect of it does not act, unfortunately, as a deterrent. In a world like this, prophecies of wholesale doom cannot be heard without what is, for most, a lifting of the spirits. Civilization will be destroyed, is their feeling, and why not?

Besides, no one sees himself as among the casualties; the human mind does not work that way. Dr. Stephen Leacock once complained of insurance agents on the same score. "They all argue that I shall one day die," he objected, "which is not so." No, the listener sees himself picking his way, the sole survivor of the crash, among the ruins of deserted cities, and the fiction of all ages testifies that this is not an unattractive prospect.

As a matter of unromantic fact there is nothing so clean and decisive as absolute destruction to face; there is only slow, unremitting misery and decay for the masses of the world. But that does not make nearly as good a story.

Again, pacifism has been unfortunate in its supporters and must struggle against the impression that it is a philosophy of diffuse benevolence and sentimentalism fit only for student Christians, "Y" leaders, and the like. Many pacifists realize what a handicap this is and there is something pathetic in their efforts to assure the young, in particular, that the peace they envisage is not a tepid, passive state. Peace hath her heroes, etc. There is the scientist in his laboratory, the intrepid explorer, the aviator winging his solitary way across oceans. Peace is, indeed, they urge, warming to the subject, more truly virile and adventurous than war. . . . But it was Aldous Huxley, I think, who pointed out what you should think when you are told that anything is more truly so-and-so than something else.

I remember hearing this discussed once at a meeting of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, where the members were brooding heavily on the necessity for finding an adequate substitute for the allure of the parade, the flag and the drum. They spoke very beautifully and inspiringly on the subject. Then they resumed the real business of the meeting, which had to do with organizing a stirring pageant for the school children of the city entitled "Dolls of All Nations."

The truth is that there is no substitute for the glamor and excitement of war. It is simply one of the things that will have to go if war goes, and it might as well be acknowledged. It can only be hoped that the public will have sense enough to realize that they are getting a bargain.

However, these are minor difficulties. The real stumbling block against which the pacifists careen is their internationalism. It has come to such a pass these days that pacifism and internationalism are looked upon as practically interchangeable terms, which is absurd. There is no reason in the world why a sensible pacifist (i. e., one who does not enjoy wars and does not wish ever to be implicated in one) should not be an ardent nationalist, and many reasons why he should be. It is an entirely adventitious partnership that has grown up between anti-war workers and internationalists, and the sooner it is broken the better.

Our professional pacifists are much too enamored of something they call "interdependence." They love to murmur it over and over again and roll it under their togues. We stand or fall together, they chant; no nation liveth to itself. When they venture into economic discussion, which is often, they remind us that the depression is world-wide; it follows, they argue, that only concerted world action will cure it, which is an admirable excuse for doing nothing at home in the meantime. Instead they hold world economic conferences. Dr. Schacht, for example, head of the German Central Bank, asserted before the late London gathering that there were only two courses open—economic isolation leading to lower standards of living (this is said very rapidly and all in one breath); and international cooperation for the opening of new markets (where?) leading to prosperity.

The internationalists assume a pained, finer clay attitude toward the realist who points out that no sane nationalism has on its program a refusal to exchange reciprocal products. It proposes only to refuse to become entangled in that

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particular form of exchange which means the buying and selling of debts. As a recent issue of the *New English Weekly* put it:

> What is envisaged in economic nationalism is emphatically not a world of national Robinson Crusoes, each eking out a precarious living on its own island, but . . . the self-respecting economic independence of nations honestly engaged in reciprocal trade to their mutual advantage, but excluding the servile relationship of debtor and creditor.

But the relationship of debtor and creditor is of course the only one of the slightest concern to the international bankers and their stooges, the eminent stuffed shirts of our world conferences. Cosmopolitan finance, incidentally, provides a model, probably the only one in existence, of genuine internationalism in action; it has certainly risen above all petty national loyalties. The Preparatory Committee of the London Conference realized that the powerful instinct persisting in mankind for a healthy nationalism was one of its most potent enemies, and the London *Times* in quoting its report inadvertently gave the show away. Failure at the conference, it remarked, would bring with it the threat of "world-wide adoption of ideals of national self-sufficiency," and added blandly: "Such a choice would shake the whole system of international finance to its foundations."

The public might ponder that. One need not be more of an alarmist than, shall we say, Senator George Norris to realize that finance has already virtually absolute power within each respective nation; has its success been so apparent that the next step is to give up the last vestiges of independent power which might be opposed to it, and hand it the custody of the world?

And in any case to what purpose should any nation so commit itself? What can be done for its benefit from without that it cannot do for itself as well or better?

> A man who should declare that on ample resources he could nevertheless only distribute the means of living among his family after consultation with his neighbors would be pronounced criminally imbecile; and equally it is sheer imbecility to profess that nations cannot deal justly with their own citizens without "internationalism."

As Philip Mairet once wrote:

> No individual who is divided against himself is of much use as a cooperator, and neither is such a nation. A congress of neurotics does not produce sanity, but an asylum. . . . So long as governments are subservient to the credit monopolists at home, they are also impotent to do anything abroad but betray the hopes of humanity.

As for foreign trade, there is no nation in the world that is not by several hundred percent in a better position to be economically self-sustaining today than it was twenty, ten or even five years ago. It cannot be too often repeated that foreign trade, in spite of the way in which it is discussed as a matter of life and death, is not an issue of even minor importance. At best it was never more than a negligible fraction of our total trade. W. B. Donham, dean of the Graduate School of Business Administration at Harvard, summed it up in his "National Ideals and Internationalist Idols":

> Our per capita exports in 1931 were only 4 percent of our per capita income and 6 percent of our per capita production. Shall we allow such small percentages to control our future? . . . Shall we seek to restore the 4 percent in the international field or shall we try to regain a far larger volume at home?

The vital problem is the equitable distribution to the consumer of the national wealth resulting from the application of modern technological processes to natural resources, to the end that the purchasing power of the public will be balanced with the prices of goods offered for sale.

In 1920 60 percent of the wealth of the United States was owned by 15 percent of the population; in 1930 more than 80 percent of the wealth was owned by about 5 percent of the population. The process continues apace. And while the worker was at one time the chief victim of exploitation, there is no need to labor the point that today agriculture and industry are equally the victims of financial policy. There would seem to be enough here to occupy the attention of economists at home for some little time.

Still, the internationalists explain, they have one trump card left. The threat of war hangs over the world; they alone know the magic word that will avert it. We must recognize our interdependence.

But what, beyond incantations, have they to offer? Wars arise from fights for markets, and as long as there is chronic insufficiency of purchasing power within each nation to absorb its own production that fight will continue.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin once spoke mournfully of the "accursed fate over the human race that we must be always quarreling," and feared "bitter fights yet in store for so-called civilized nations over trade which ought to be common to all of us and a link . . . rather than a destructive mechanism."

America, asking nothing of any other nation, could live at peace with the rest of the world and could offer its own citizens, to a degree one does not have to be a technocrat to realize, all the requisites of a full, leisurely and civilized existence.

It may be ironical, but it is only by enlightened selfishness such as this and, if you will, by denial

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of interdependence, that the cause of wars can be removed. If the financial policy of any nation in the world—only one—were directed to an increase in the standard of living at home proportionate to its natural resources and productive capacity, it would immeasurably ease the existing international tension. Here at last would be a country not attempting to force its goods on the rest of the world while its own people did without them, but quietly attending to its own business.

"No nation liveth—" begin the internationalists automatically, but the fact remains. The home markets of each and every country are the only safety valves against war. The questions of exporting the overspill, of exchanging goods for mutual convenience (as opposed to investment of capital abroad with frantic precautions against any repayment in goods) are the merest frills and details. There is no problem connected with the getting of goods, whether from within or without. The goods are already here. But the odd preoccupation of our statesmen at present is how to destroy them, how to get this embarrassing surplus out of sight as quickly as possible. Anything, in short, but accepting the fact of its existence and facing the problem of equating purchasing power to it.

If that problem is beyond the intelligence, the courage and the humanity of nations, it will not help matters to clamp the victims more tightly together in their misery. Though yoked to each other ever so closely as they goosestep to their doom, they will not be cheered on their march by the jubilant twitterings of our idealists.

## *Solitude*

Oh, sweet, my love, my loneliness, my lover,
Today my passion exquisite, the cave
Where glowing-eyed I wander to discover
Darkness disheveled, shattered like a wave,
While Silence fluttering downward like a leaf
Pale-veined and very lovely, cut the brief
Laughter that stands between us and the grave!

Today a jeweled spectrum underground
Sparkling about my head, where I uncover
Long hidden gems that startle and confound
The earthy senses. Loneliness, my lover,
With the blind eyelid's shut plenipotence,
Today my bliss, tomorrow stark offense!

Tomorrow poison—dank, libidinous vault
Wherein I beat the closed walls with my fists
And cry the roof down loudly by assault—
Remembering names to call on in long lists;
The bore, the crank, the witless, the austere—
Oh, anyone to get me out of here!

DOROTHY COWLES PINKNEY.

# ON WOMEN

By KATHERINE BURTON

IN LONG ago Anglo-Saxon days they called us *hlaf-digas,* a word which means, according to most modern interpreters, a loaf-giver, one who gave hospitality. It is a gracious lovely interpretation of what a woman was and what she still should be and we hope that we are all still regular *hlaf-digas.*

But nowadays there are so many things to be considered by the possessors of that title. Who made the loaf? Is it of pure ingredients? How much did it cost to produce? Was it made under good working conditions? Does it nestle under the blue eagle's wing? The *hlaf-diga's* job has wider horizons than it used to have.

If any of those questions demanded real answers in the lovely days of long ago, they were answered by the men. And if the answers in that far-off time were wrong, it didn't really matter a great deal. At present all these questions are still being answered by the men and the *hlaf-diga* still has the proud opportunity of giving away loaves, but—

Women, many of them, are just plain discouraged nowadays. Something is terribly wrong and an unhappy feeling is growing upon women that they are going to be called on to straighten things out, and they can hardly face the idea of insisting on being put in charge of cleaning up: of having, after the cleaning up and throwing out rubbish, to see men bring back again from the trash heap the adored old things that are still plenty good enough to go fishing in.

Of course men have really run things—like the government let us say—and they seem to have run it breathless just now. And all along through the centuries they have talked about the necessity of being practical and how all that women have is some fool thing called intuition that tells them when the baby is going to have croup or when William will lose his job—just an impractical sense that can't help the world to function any better.

The great question is now beginning to arise as to just what is meant by practical. A very reasonable definition of it might be the getting things done with the most successful termination for the good of the most people, but I am afraid that will not prove an appealing definition to the sex that considers itself practical.

There is no doubt that men have been practical, or claimed to be so for a very long time. Poets may call years God's instants, but they seem longer than that to most people who live practical lives, which means eat, sleep, raise children, get old and die, all of which matters have to be done practically and not intuitionally, and which are the concern of women as well as men.

But a different something is stirring in the world now. Maybe it is just woman's intuition again, telling her there is something wrong about what men choose to call practical. Woman, the home's housekeeper, is getting dizzy at the doings of man, the world's housekeeper. She listens to his suggestions for bettering conditions in undisguised

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amazement. Dig up every third row of cotton to help cotton prices—when her washwoman weeps because Willie hasn't got a shirt to go to school in? Not grow next year's wheat to help use up this year's crop—when she reads of a man who goes into a bakeshop and demands bread at the point of a knife because his small children have not eaten for two days? Sell arms to any old power that wants to fight a smaller power and a helpless one—while men sit endlessly debating peace in a large cold hall across the sea? Suggest that Brazil burn up its coffee crop because it has too much—and a man on the street begs for a nickle to buy a cup of it so he won't freeze before morning?

Women have other traditions than men. They have the small exact traditions of the home. They have always taken jelly to a sick neighbor, or saved crumbs for puddings, or turned down the lights when no one was using them, or mended things to make them last a day longer. They learned long ago that little things count a lot.

Of course women have not fitted into modern politics—and it is no reproach to them either. When a woman is successful in politics, she is probably a woman gone wrong in emulating men's doings, or a big-hearted soul who hopes to change things out in the world, or else she just doesn't realize what a world of unreality she is getting into.

Men live in the present. If a thing goes well, it is because of the method in use right then. And so that method is applied right along and we get a republic to a kingdom that swings along fine. Suddenly the time spirit or somebody's *Weltschmerz* or maybe the stars start to prove the system will henceforth be wrong instead of right. But men hang on to the good old system until they are overwhelmed, until it goes its Spenglerish way to oblivion. Men don't seem to learn from being conditioned. Women do. That may help in the near future.

Besides men are prepared for the expected, women for the unexpected. Anyone who has handled the theft of a wheel from one's son by a neighbor's child who has repainted it and calls it his, and who can get that wheel back without bloody noses, hating neighbors, and reprisals, could easily handle a few thousand Communists at their raringest. Anyone who has taken care of several children cutting teeth in hot weather can handle a nation's stomach ache. Men get up a nice republic and everything, and a few years later Communists mess it all up, paint it red, and call it theirs. And first thing you know you have rioting and fighting and all that sort of thing. Any mother could have fixed that up. You can't tell the average mother anything about Communists: her own family or the one next door is sure to contain at least one.

Furthermore, a man, after some years of running, gets thoroughly confused and goes into a club of some kind where things are quieter, where he can perhaps wear feathers or at least have a lovely title and be a Rotarian or a Knight or a Lion. Mind, these men are usually philanthropic, too, and there are always homes for Grandpa Rotarians and orphanages for Lionettes. They mean well, men do, and I think most women realize that and hate to spoil their fun, so long as it is innocent anyway. But has it ever dawned on many of them that perhaps there is no reason for such institutions at all, that if we worked out a more sensible way of spending the public money we wouldn't need them? It costs an average of $385 to house a person in an institution. Suppose, now, that the mother of five, left a widow, had enough for each child so that she could stay at home and bring them up instead of letting them run the streets while she went scrubbing. If she had the money to bring them up right, then maybe we wouldn't need the money for institutions to keep them in after they had gone wrong. But there I am getting visionary again, just like a woman, and I hear the male chorus: "Get back to your loaves, lady."

Women get together in clubs, too, of course. But they usually do it for something concrete and constructive—to get culture or new recipes or learn how to bring up infants *in re* their foods, needs and errors. And, after all, you can't cure the world's indigestion unless the infant citizens are cured first, can you? And then what? The infant gets his cure, and when he grows up the male world gives him chalk for bread and maybe a musket and a few bullets for provender.

It takes women in quiet homes or a Pope in the Vatican, both with households to manage, to think up real cures or have patience for them. Shouting is a cinch and seems to be getting you somewhere, but when you are silent you have to think. And in every home that is a home (Reno to the contrary, the country is full of them) there is a certain amount of love, justice, financial worry and happiness, all of which helps build it. And certainly these are about all the emotions that any government can have.

As Dorothy Bromley once phrased it, when a woman has made enough cookies for her family she stops making them until they are eaten up and cooks something else. Men don't—they just think up new ways to persuade the children to eat the cookies. Even if stomach aches ensue, it must be all right if only the sales sheet shows an upward trend.

A mad world, my masters, you have produced.

Now women are getting tired of all these shouted statistics. Men's laws have made a lot of trouble for them lately. And there are the irreligious men who teach a faith of bewilderment, irresolution and atheism in colleges whose ancient seals bear proud affirmation of faith in a resolute guiding God. There are the men who solemnly get together and declare war, or are frightened into it, or are getting rich because of it; and women's sons, taught the loveliness, the necessity of peace, are killed in an instant, or live to become embittered crippled dependents in a country for which they should be working, their minds as sane as their bodies ought to be.

The *hlaf-digas* can all read nowadays. They can read appeals to keep men in jobs in order to help the unemployment situation and in the next column read state-

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ments that the government is saving millions by firing many of its employees. Mr. Mellon joyously puts over a big tariff with every economist in the country begging him not to. And a few days later comes the statement that a large new aluminum plant is being put up in Canada, evidently to avoid American tariffs and use lower Canadian wages. It doesn't make sense, and women have a secret passion for things that make sense.

They have watched from the sidelines, and seen men being thrown to the lions or lions getting thrown to the men, and they are beginning to feel that both those games have lasted long enough; pretty soon there won't be any lions left and very few men. After centuries of indirectness, of being told to hold their tongues or holding them anyway, they are beginning to object and to offer suggestions. But nearly always, notice, suggestions along the lines of the home, whether the individual or the national home. Mrs. Roosevelt and Frances Perkins are outstanding examples of the sort of talking—they show clearly that everlasting desire of women to clean house, not to move out but to do the next thing, which is to clean up and produce that cleanliness which is so close to godliness.

Everywhere we read the thoughts of women converging on this one idea. There is Lorine Pruette, suggesting that Judge Florence Allen, an outstanding pacifist, be appointed Secretary of War, under the logical assumption that a war department is supposed to keep us out of war. There is Mrs. Martin, author of "Prohibiting Poverty," with a plan for mobilizing young people to produce the necessities of life by working for the state for a certain time—merely an extension idea of having Mary do the supper dishes and dust the living-room. There is Mrs. Ferguson, calling for a new idealism, asking the world of men to realize that their political and business methods will no longer serve, that "the kind of unselfishness that mothers know" will have to be used to save the world. There is Mrs. Irwin who believes that men, being more creative and intellectual than women, ought to be left in peace to carry out great scientific and literary feats, and thus leave the housekeeping of government to women since they, that is the men, "know nothing about system, economy, or efficiency, and pay the biggest prices for everything material and spiritual."

Many voices and all with two ideas—to make a decent world for children and to clean house as the first aid toward that.

Perhaps back of it all is the fact that men have worked up a very poor system of distribution—and after all what else may the world depend on but distribution? Theirs seems to have failed in many ways. Distribution of bread for hungry stomachs, distribution of justice for hungry minds, distribution of spiritual values for hungry souls. All this, in the microcosm of the home, women has tried to do. Good old *hlaf-digas*—that's what we still are. To be loaf-givers is our fate—and perhaps our desire. For we simply cannot give stones, and perhaps that is the fact that will change and save the world.

# MAURICE DE LA TAILLE

By IGNATIUS KELLY

WITHIN the last few months the Catholic Church has lost by death a distinguished theologian and a celebrated teacher, the Reverend Maurice de la Taille of the Society of Jesus. He passed away in the midst of his labors, as he was preparing to complete a treatise on grace. His great work, the "Mysterium Fidei," is known to many readers of English through its English presentation, published by Longmans, Green and Company, and some of the details of his life may be of interest to them as well as to others familiar with his Latin and French publications.

Maurice de la Taille was born November 30, 1872, at Semblancay (Indre et Loire) in France. He had ten brothers, two of whom entered the Society of Jesus, Timoleon, now a missionary in Shanghai, and Arthur, who died during his novitiate. He made the major part of his secondary studies at Canterbury in England, where he began to acquire that facility and grace in English which became an advantageous part of his cultural and ministerial equipment. He spent one year at Ramsgate College, directed by the Benedictine Fathers, a year that remained ever happy in his memory. Throughout his life, he had the greatest affection for the Sons of St. Benedict. A friend used to say jokingly that he celebrated Mass like a Benedictine abbot. His Mass was always marked by a certain major solemnity.

He entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Canterbury, October 30, 1890, and studied there for two years. The following three years were spent in the Isle of Jersey, making his philosophical studies under such distinguished men as Le Bachelet, Antoine and Bainvel. He studied theology at Paris and Lyons in 1899, 1900 and 1901, received Sacred Orders at Tours in this last year and then completed his studies at Canterbury in 1902.

Father de la Taille exercised the sacred functions of the priesthood at Preston in England in 1903, and made his tertianship at Mold in 1904. His distinguished success in theology marked him for a professorship and from 1905 to 1916 he lectured in theology at the Catholic University of Angers with such eloquence, erudition and piety that his call to Rome and the Gregorian University followed in 1919. He had served the last two years of the World War as chaplain in the Canadian Overseas Forces.

At Rome, his courses were among the most distinguished in the Gregorian University. He lectured to the candidates for the Magisterium in Sacred Theology, upon whom he made a profound impression. His listeners appreciated him as a man of penetrating genius, distinguished mind and extensive erudition. There is probably not much room for originality in the teaching of theology, but Father de la Taille was always himself. His language mirrored his clear mind, and the doctrine of Augustine, Aquinas and Suarez was the doctrine of de la Taille, his own, thoroughly meditated and ex-

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plained in a personal, magnetic manner. Visitors at the Gregorian were amazed at the ease and distinction of his Latin.

Now and then a flash of wit would relieve the usual serious dignity of his lecture. Thus one morning, when he was having some trouble with his ordinarily clear and musical voice, he stopped after an exasperating catch in his throat to smile and exclaim quietly, "Raucae factae sunt fauces meae." David would have smiled at this turn of the Psalm verse.

Father de la Taille's first theological writings were published in 1904, when an article of his appeared in the periodical *Etudes*. It dealt with the principal errors of the modernists. His commentary on the encyclical, "Pascendi Dominici Gregis," was one of the most appreciative and complete of the many excellent studies of this very important papal document, which dealt the death-blow to modernism within the Church.

By far the most important work, however, of Father de la Taille is his "Mysterium Fidei," known throughout the whole world. This magnificent fruit of his genius was ready for publication in 1915, but due to the trouble of war and after-war uncertainties, it was not given to the world until 1921. No theological work of modern times has received the attention of this work. It has been opposed and defended in sharp disputes, but its opponents as well as its defenders acknowledge it to be among the principal theological works of modern times. And many will willingly subscribe to the judgment of Father Joyce, expressed in the *Dublin Review* (January and June, 1931):

"We do not exaggerate in daring to affirm that there has been no work edited since the Council of the Vatican, which has drawn such universal attention as the 'Mysterium Fidei.' It is an immense treasure-store of science, it diffuses a new light upon the old truths, and a first glance will reveal to nearly everyone a profound skill in dialectics and a suave piety, redolent in the entire book."

Indeed, the "Mysterium Fidei" is a summa of the Eucharist, pure theology, pure dogma, as it is revealed in the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition and as it is defined by the Church in its councils; but it is dogma exposed with method, coordinated and clarified, illustrated and explained. It is dogma, in all its sublimity, its richness, in all its harmony and its admirable proportions. Such is the judgment of another distinguished theologian, Jean M. Hanssens, S. J. With it, few will dissent.

Maurice de la Taille spent himself quietly in the service of the Master, Whom he so ardently loved. In all his teaching and all his writings, there was this one foremost object, the cry of Saint Paul: "Dum omni modo . . . Christus annuntietur." And now that he has fallen asleep, we may surely dare to hope that the "Mysterium Fidei" is no longer a mystery for him; that Jesus Christ, to Whom he dedicated his life, has opened its understanding to him in the manifestation of His Eternal Vision. He prepared for that vision with the words upon his dying lips, "Dieu soit béni!"

# COMMUNICATIONS

## A YOUNG MAN'S VIEW

Roxbury, Mass.

TO Norman McKenna, Esq.: "A Young Man's View" merits salute, acclaim. My hat is off to the author. Why? Because it acted on me as tonic and spur, esthetically, mentally, spiritually.

Even in one's classical travels there are certain prospects that dominate our attention and intoxicate our admiration, passages that once read remain unforgettably with us, a part of us, commandingly, inspiringly. They have touched us with the music of heaven and its beauty, for they reflect God and to Him they lead. So, *si licet parva cum magnis comparare rebus,* as the current issues of a first-rate journal come to hand, one is edified and exalted uncommonly, once in a blue-moon, by an article of the stature and grace of yours, if you will permit this straightforward way of talking. Not since reading Father R. I. Wilbur's "Ethics on Solid Ground" and Mr. J. M. Lalley's "Reflections on the Natural Law," have I got comprehensively such a "kick."

Indulge this intrusion, this descant, please. I like the life, the stamina, the range, and the suppleness not only of your style but of your ideas. I pray God that you will write more and if this symbolical genuflection before your achievement is the slightest impetus to your expanding abilities, this obscure stranger will feel amply repaid.

Our youth, as eager, gifted, and ambitious as any, flock out of the seats of learning year after year, and are swallowed up by the monster, mediocrity. They are choked and paralyzed by the pusillanimity and the lethargy and the obscurantism of the oldsters who are already dead and rotten, so far as progress goes, and only obstruct, and ought to be buried. They carry faded banners. They kill and maim and infect the very wholesomeness and vigor of nascent life and hope. I am not shrieking, am not on stilts, though if such postures helped I'd use them. God knows we all gain strength from goads and words of cheer, from discipline or the school of experience.

We are not living in the Ages of Faith. Yet forget them we should not. For their faith is stirring, illuminating, nearer the time of Bethlehem and Calvary, perhaps nearer their atmosphere. You cannot escape the conclusion that they were ages saturated in the theological virtues as ours is saturated with the vices of neo-paganism. Unless you are a sleepy valetudinarian cerebrally.

Catholicism is stagnating in this country and brains atrophy before they mature. A youth shows promise and he's stoned to death with ineptitudes or insane adulation or barbaric jockeys. George Shuster has spoken plainly and valiantly on occasion and has not unknown spanking and the degradation of being snubbed and sneered at—the contemporary penalty for thought.

You have blown a rousing blast with your trumpet. I shall listen for counter-calls. Shall the answer be silence, devastating, corroding?

No; I'm not a cynic. I abhor it as an abomination as black and cruel and fatal as old-fogyism.

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I want to be worthy of our fathers and not a badge of shame to our posterity and evidence of stupidity to the Bolsheviks. Father Coughlin, by and large, is solidly, flamingly right; as Monsignor Ryan said, "on the side of the angels." Yet the Church stands on the sidelines like a dumb spectator at the most thrilling moment in the game. Are, then, our churchmen for the most part, on the side of . . .? Even a child practises formal logic.

Have you read Sir James Barrie's "Courage"? Short, sweet, unanswerable.

I'm thumping my breast for the outrageous longwindedness of this letter. I'm proud of its *laudanda,* including audacity. *Macta virtute! Salve atque vale!*

Cheeringly, by Faith,
Cheerfully, by Charity,
Challengingly, by Hope,
Yours in Christ our Lord,
JOHN X. REGAN.

East Weymouth, Mass.

TO the Editor: In the current issue of THE COMMONWEAL Mr. Norman McKenna voices the suspicion that one of the reasons why Catholic literature is not more eagerly read, is that literature itself. Like many others of us, he is not entirely clear as to just what is wrong. But he does imply that Catholic literature, fiction at any rate, too often lacks vitality, and that, because it does not look at life as it is; does not come to grips with the problems that actually beset the ordinary day. And I write to announce my agreement with that.

An editorial in the same number of THE COMMONWEAL quotes a priest in the *Mercury* to the effect that a Catholic can hardly write a great novel because of the persistent theological mood of the Catholic, because of his "dogmatic conviction and intense moral seriousness." He cannot write of life "without falling into the manner of a tract or an epistle to the brethren." This explains the lack of popular appeal in our books; people avoid both individuals and books that never leave off preaching.

Rather than offering an example of the faults these writers suggest, let me offer an example of the contrary virtues. "Twenty Years A-Growing" is written by a Catholic, all about Catholics, and against a background where Catholicity is as much a part of the scene as the sea and the sky. It is the Catholic Book of the Month Club type. It has no plot, no keen characterization, it retails no gripping incident; but it is delightful, and very interesting. Now I would not be rash enough to seek to analyze the charm of a person or a book, but the charm of this book does seem to me to lie in those attributes that so many of our books miss: in its sweet naturalness, its good-natured candor, its untroubled observation of racial or, maybe better, domestic poverties and innocences. There is a refreshing absence of that constant anxiety about impressions that so often smothers the personality of our books, and robs them of the breath of reality and the pulse of life.

Those who write of Catholic things or Catholic themes are far from being handicapped, are far from sacrificing a wider audience to higher purpose, for there is a real interest on the part of the American people in Catholic history, Catholic experience, and Catholic intentions. There have been two plays offered in our town these past few weeks with Catholic settings, that were given the full attention of the city. Just to be specific, "Days without End" and "State of Grace" (now entitled "The Joyous Season"). In fact they received more attention from those who are not Catholics than from those who are. This may be only a straw, but it shows drift of attention. Catholic themes will have as wide an audience as any others when they are handled vigorously and with objective honesty.

REV. GEORGE W. CASEY.

Houtzdale, Pa.

TO the Editor: I hope there is sympathy for "A Young Man's View," which Norman McKenna presents with all that baffled eagerness. It is Saint Mark who observes that the rich young man who approached Our Lord came—characteristically—running. There is something of this impulsive energy in Mr. McKenna's article. Perhaps there are, as the article would suggest, other "children sitting in the market place" who cry to their older companions: "We have piped to you, and you have not danced: we have lamented, and you have not mourned." While the issue Mr. McKenna raises in his plea for a magazine by and for Catholic youth may be problematical, he presents a case against our novelists' evasion of the contemporary set-up.

In my time, pert undergraduate novels (like F. Scott Fitzgerald's) were in a way a portent. I wondered what would become of the precious Amory Blaines who toyed with the notion of Catholicism against a pendemic motif of jazz. That bacchantic post-war processional was halted in due time by the depression. Meanwhile the elusive termites bred of an amorphous *Zeitgeist* have been at work on the social and economic structure. The presence of Freudian satyrs, lurking around the corner, poisons the moonlight on Juliet's balcony. And two of the most craftsman-like of recent Catholic novels deal with the elegancies of the music salon. Madame Undset's "Paul Selmar" is more typically contemporary, but her hero's locale is alien.

Has no one encouraged Myles Connolly to contemplate the contemporary scene in an ampler scrutiny? There was surely more than an intimation of talent in his engaging "Mr. Blue," which, I believe, was never adequately appreciated.

REV. ANTHONY MISUKIEWICZ.

San Francisco, Calif.

TO the Editor: It has been a source of surprise to me that none of the answers to "Instructor," who is interested in notable "Converts to Catholicism," has mentioned the books by Owen Francis Dudley. The latest issue of THE COMMONWEAL carries an article by Norman McKenna which contains some pointed remarks about Catholic novels. Is it possible that he has missed reading "The Pageant of Life," "The Shadow on

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the Earth," and "The Masterful Monk"? To "Instructor" and to Mr. McKenna I would say that I have been keeping my copies of these three books in circulation for some time among the younger generation—and their elders too—and not once have they failed to register. Let me quote from a letter which I received yesterday from one of the youths of the new era:

"I have just read the last page of 'The Pageant of Life.' I don't know what to say. I am stunned, completely. . . . The story is the most powerful which I have ever read. It was beautiful, horrible, and alive. [N. B. Mr. McKenna.] I have never read anything which has affected me so much. I know that I cannot go through life without having received a definite effect from the reading of it. . . . I shall write more later when I have had a chance to realize that I have read a novel; that I have not lived all of it myself."

It has been my experience that giving out such books as these, Benson's novels, and such, is much the best way to arouse an interest in Catholic reading. I have seen some bright youths go to sleep in the erudite literary arms of Karl Adam, Dawson, and others—and I have seen them lie awake and thinking after they had finished with Owen Francis Dudley.

ANOTHER INSTRUCTOR.

## JOHN SHAKESPEARE'S WILL

Paris, France.

TO the Editor: The commentary published in THE COMMONWEAL of January 12 upon an article of mine dealing with John Shakespeare's spiritual testament brings up some questions: some questions so interesting to the ultimate establishment of the authenticity of this document that you will perhaps accord me the favor of enough space to give at least one definite answer to Mr. Washila's objections, and continue the discussion of others.

There can no longer be the slightest doubt that the accusation brought against the ex-bailif of Stratford for recusancy on the list of the Warwickshire Commissioners was as a Catholic, not as a Puritan suspect. The fact now acknowledged by Sir E. K. Chambers is beyond controversy, for the list drawn up in 1592 contains only the names of supposed Catholics. Instructions given to examiners forbade them explicitly to "press any man" concerning matters of doctrine or conscience but told them to insist on allegiance to the Queen, opinions concerning papal supremacy and "approval or maintenance of seminary priests." Hence, this point may be established: whatever John Shakespeare was at heart, it was as a Catholic and not as a Puritan that he was accused by the Warwickshire Commissioners. His rôle in inaugurating theatrical performances at Stratford should have been enough to prevent so much ink-spilling over this question, for in those days the chief objection Puritans made to plays was that they were a survival of "papistry," specially connected, in the Stratford region, with the performance at Corpus Christi of the Coventry monks.

It would now be interesting to establish whether the will signed John Shakespeare was actually endorsed by the former bailif or by his daughter, Joan. I confess that formerly I inclined toward the latter hypothesis for the same reasons as those invoked by Mr. Leo Washila, and I still maintain an open mind toward the problem.

Saint Winifreda's Well was in such repute among the rural population of the midland shires that many kept pebbles from the brink and a certain miraculous cure is recorded by Father Gerard from their use. Would it not be possible that John Shakespeare, or any other man who had made vow or prayer to this early British martyr, feeling that such petition had been favorably heard, might have selected her as a patroness rather than a male saint?

A more essential point, the chirography of the original document, alas, may never be investigated, since those who branded it as a "Jordan forgery" let it perish as such! Only the two copies made by Jordan and Malone, respectively, subsist as a basis for speculation. However, according to Malone's comment, which I have under my eye, he never affirmed that the writing was not of the epoch 1580-1600, but that it "appeared to him more recent than" most documents of that time; however he noted particularly that one text in his possession, written by the player Alleyn, resembled it very closely.

It seems certain that the body of the testament was in clerkly hand, with blanks left for the signer's name and that of the patron saint. Thus the writing may have well been in advance of the period, for it is noteworthy that the excellent education given to English priests in the seminaries established by Cardinal Allen tended toward more uniform Roman handwriting, and the unity and modernization of spelling so striking in the will.

I believe that none of the authorities now pretend, like Sir Sidney Lee, that John Shakespeare could not write. Of course the reports of the council were made by a clerk but there is a note in the Chamberlain's report which stands as an example of his handwriting in recognition of an old debt.

As to the period, I remain of the opinion that the spiritual testament was the direct fruit either of Edmund Campion's or of Robert Southwell's mission. That is, at a time when religious enthusiasm among discouraged folk had been freshly awakened and when it was natural to show, by some overt act—which would not necessarily lead to martyrdom—devotion to the proscribed faith.

Now Campion's mission came in 1580, eleven of his priests met death in London or the shires before 1590. Southwell's activities extended from 1590 to 1593 and persecutions were continued after his martyrdom until 1600. Consequently, whether it were John or Joan who signed the will recommended by Borromeo, I still incline to believe that it was done before 1600 in the flush of the enthusiasm revived by the heroic martyrs of the eighties and nineties.

John, who presented a habeas corpus in 1588, must have been molested more than once. A report from Charlecote House describes how vigorously Sir Thomas Lucy brandished his search-warrants over all Catholic suspects and we have Sir Thomas's own word for it that John Shakespeare was one of these.

CLARA LONGWORTH DE CHAMBRUN.

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# THE PLAY

By RICHARD DANA SKINNER

*Can Religious Plays Succeed?*

THERE is a great need at this particular moment in the history of our theatre to turn aside from the immediate run of Broadway plays in order to ask ourselves that most important question: Can religious plays succeed?

The occasion for the question is the storm of controversy aroused, both in the daily press and in many magazines, by the recent productions of Eugene O'Neill's "Days without End" and Philip Barry's "The Joyous Season."

Both plays were distinctly Catholic in theme. Both occasioned no little surprise on the part of the audience and critics because of this very Catholic quality, and both were very severely criticized for their alleged failure to measure up to the dramatic standards associated with the two distinguished authors.

Now, as readers of this department very well know, I felt that the criticism of the O'Neill play was unmerited, that the play possessed inherent dramatic power, that it contained much fine writing, and that a large measure of critical assault upon it was occasioned by the unfamiliarity of the theme rather than by inherent defects in the play itself. On the other hand, I found considerable reason for agreement with the general criticism of Philip Barry's "The Joyous Season" on purely dramatic grounds. The play did not have the essential conflict of true drama. It was a delicate and charming preachment rather than a real play. The preachment itself was very sound, often thoroughly engaging, and shot through with a welcome sincerity, but sincerity of intention and soundness of viewpoint are not sufficient by themselves to make a play.

It is easy enough, of course, to assume that the Broadway critics are receptive only to plays with a thoroughly modern twist which delve boldly into the vices and problems of modern life. But this assumption is exceedingly unfair to the newspaper critics as I know them through their work. I have seen them go into rhapsodies of praise over something as simple and forthright and innocent as Sierra's "Cradle Song." I have seen them discover, of their own initiative, and without responding to any advance ballyhoo, the inner charm and graciousness of "One Sunday Afternoon." I have also seen them condemn, in no uncertain terms, countless plays which attempted clumsily to copy the fads of the day and which relied on filth or suggestiveness to attain a box-office appeal. It it only fair and just to this hard-working group of men to say that their criticisms in the main are determined by the dramatic merits rather than by the theme material of the plays they review.

It is essential, therefore, to recognize that the majority of the critics honestly felt a lack of drama in the O'Neill and Barry plays and merely stated their views frankly. In the case of "Days without End" I think they were mistaken. And I find a great many experienced theatregoers who agree with my feeling on this point. In the case of the Barry play, I think the critics were right—in spite of the fact that every instinct within me responded to the direct and beautiful statement which Mr. Barry made of the Catholic faith and what it could mean as a way of life.

The aftermath of these two plays coming to Broadway in such rapid succession has been a conviction on the part of some of the critics that no play with a thoroughly religious theme can make effective drama. Faith, so the argument runs, is a subjective matter which cannot be stated in the objective terms of dramatic action. The answer to this very fundamental question can be found, I believe, through the simple method of going back to the Gospel narratives, and also to the Catholic idea of the sacraments as the outer or objective sign of an inward grace. Time and again, in the Gospel narratives, a miraculous cure is accompanied by an outward sign. In the administration of the sacraments of the Church, the outer or objective action is given its due importance. This, it seems to me, gives the essence of the formula through which a playwright can take a theme of religious faith and make it completely objective on the stage by recognizing the need of outer action to express inward faith. It is part of the historic breakaway from Catholic traditions to believe that faith alone without good works can accomplish miracles of either mind or body. It is when playwrights follow this non-Catholic tradition, and seek to express the struggles or victories of faith without the accompaniment of proper objective symbols, that their plays become difficult for an audience brought up in an environment of no faith whatever to follow.

I might say, in justifiable criticism of the O'Neill play, for example, that the priest, Father Baird, never emerges clearly as the objective agent of the inner grace which John Loving receives. I mentioned in my original review of this play that the character of Father Baird was at times too evangelistic, that he failed to come forth as a man of strong outer action. It seems to me in retrospect that if Father Baird had been more of the sacramental priest in the sense of one to whom John Loving turned to confess his sins, and seek the grace of repentance, the play might have carried more conviction even to those whose training and environment were not in sympathy with the idea. Mr. O'Neill's effort to universalize the play by not making it too concretely Catholic may, in this sense, have been at fault.

In the case of the Barry play, I am even more certain that objective expression is lacking as well as a clear unity of dramatic theme. The finest scenes in the play were undoubtedly those in which Sister Christina takes forceful command of the situation and becomes a visible active agent for the renewal of faith in various members of the Farley family.

I readily admit that making any matter of religious faith objective in dramatic terms is probably the most difficult single task which a playwright can set himself, but that is very different from admitting that a good play on a theme of religious faith is inherently impossible.

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# BOOKS

## Religious and Philosophical Works

FOR THE serious reader, this age of scholarship offers literature by the truck load. We have made a somewhat random selection of the more solid new books on religion and philosophy, regretting that space precludes giving lengthier notices but certain that many of the titles ought not to go unnoticed while the air rings with startled gossip about a crucifix in a real last act on Broadway.

"Catholic Mission Theory" and "Catholic Mission History," two standard treatises by the Reverend Joseph Schmidlin, D. D., are now available in an English translation (Techny, Illinois: Mission Press. $5.00 each). Reference has already been made editorially to these volumes, which are systematic treatises leaving virtually no section of the field unexplored. The "History" in particular is an admirably rich and panoramic book which, curious lacunae (e. g., the Christianizing of Britain), can be depended upon for informance and guidance. Though there are passages one might have Englished differently, the translators are to be congratulated.

The Oxford Movement continues to attract writers. In "The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement" a valuable attempt is made to trace the responsiveness of Tractarian theologians to the numerous and stirring ideas of social reform then current (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.50). The author, who is the Reverend William George Peck, has retained the lecture form in which he first presented the subject, but there are practically no loose ends and the style is uniformly good. He manages to show from the writings of Pusey, Ward and others that the Movement was not merely pietistic but remained deeply aware of the moral challenge latent in the industrial revolution. The rest of the book brings the argument up to date, analyzing the various phases of the struggle between secularism and Catholicism. It is a good treatise, as useful as anything in recent Anglo-Catholic literature. One feels none the less that the subject is left suspended in the ether of philosophic discussion and without much of a ladder for getting down to earth again.

"Evolution of Newman's Conception of Faith" is a dissertation in which the Reverend John A. Elbert seeks to prove that the concept of faith outlined in the "Grammar of Assent" was implicitly contained in Newman's earlier writings. Nothing very new is brought to light, and the study of the writers from whom the preacher of the Oxford University sermons drew counsel might have been extended much farther. Even so this is a valuable and conscientious little study, which might be termed a contribution to research in the manner of Newman's conversion.

Similar to Newman in many respects, Cardinal de Berulle was nevertheless a typical French mystic. Few writers have experienced a more extraordinary resurrection, more than a century of nearly absolute neglect being followed by a period of keen interest largely brought about by the writings of the Abbé Bremond. "Le Cardinal de Berulle," by Claude Taveau, is not a biography but a presentation of the Cardinal's writings (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer. Francs 15). The plan is logical and practical; the presentation is all that could be desired.

Two books on American subjects are among the new offerings. Mary Watters has written a "History of the Church in Venezuela" which, despite a somewhat heavy academic style, can be classed among the really satisfactory volumes of American ecclesiastical history (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. $3.00). The author, whose attitude toward Spanish colonization efforts and policies is very friendly, tells the story from the beginning to the present time. Conditions in Venezuela were always trying. Though in the early days the Church made a fair amount of substantial progress, neither its position nor its wealth in this colony compared with what it had gained in Mexico or Peru. The later narrative falls naturally into three parts: the relative peace of the Bolivarian era; the tense struggle between Catholicism and Masonry after the middle years of the nineteenth century; and the contemporary epoch. Miss Watters paints no very rosy picture of the Church in Venezuela today, holding that it is without influence and position.

"The Story of the Mission Santa Cruz," by H. A. van Coenen Torchiana (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company. $2.50) is both a eulogy of Spain's effort to transplant European civilization to the Americas and a specific study of the Santa Cruz Mission. Too loosely written to be very readable, the book is nevertheless sane and helpful. The section on the mission proper embodies the results of interesting and valuable research.

Though there are many books dealing with the life of Our Lord, room can always be found for a good one. "Jesus Christ: His Life, His Teaching, His Work," translated from the German of Professor August Raetz by Mary Sands, is not a very colorful or vividly written volume but there is nothing of equal length which we think would be more useful to the priest or the apologist (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company. $3.50). The author defends what might be called a "modern classical" interpretation of Christ's life and work. While the conclusions are always orthodox and traditional, ample allowance is made for the difference between the present-day mentality and that, say, of the Counter-Reformation era. It is concise rather than heavy, and is sometimes distinguished for quite original points of view.

We have just enough space left to group together four other publications. "A Great and Humble Soul," translated from the French of the Reverend Henry Perroy, S. J., by the Reverend John J. Burke, C. S. P., is a very moving life history of Mother Thérèse Couderc, whose achievement is reflected in the admirable Cenacles which, in a number of American cities, foster the retreat movement among women. Her life was in many ways extraordinary, and the story of her ten years' sharing in the

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Agony probably deserves a place beside the great records of mystic sanctity (New York: The Paulist Press. $1.50). "Il Esdras" is a textual and critical study of a doctrinally important scriptural book. The editor, Professor W. O. E. Oesterley, has conformed rather faithfully to the spirit which governs the Westminster Commentaries as a whole (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $4.50). "Ethics and Moral Tolerance," by Arthur Kenyon Rogers, is another contribution to the debate about moral "values" which has been going on for some years between the professors (New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.50). The best sections are two chapters on quantitative and qualitative "standards"; but the book as a whole is only nice semi-idealism which can't go either backward or forward. Decidedly curious is "The Gate of Remembrance," by Frederick Bligh Bond, which offers what purport to be the records of "psychic" communication with the help of which certain lost chapels of Glastonbury Cathedral were unearthed (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $2.50). We shall refrain from adding any commentary. The reader who gets into the book will find himself asking not a few puzzled questions.

T. C.

## Slavery's Poison

*Slavery in Mississippi, by Charles S. Sydnor. New York: Published for the American Historical Association, by D. Appleton-Century Company. $3.50.*

LONG before the Civil War had broken the heart of the nation the question of slavery had hardened the arteries of mutual understanding between the North and the South and had poisoned the bloodstream of our national life. Lincoln's trembling pen signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but it was powerless to scratch the Mason and Dixon line off the map of the United States.

Even in this comparatively late and distinterested day much that is written about conditions which obtained in slave days is palpably partizan. Dr. Charles Sydnor has given us in "Slavery in Mississippi" an account which is coldly impartial; and, according to some, slavery was at its worst in Mississippi. The book describes the conditions under which the slaves lived, worked, and were managed, as well as matters of food, clothing, shelter, physical and social care, plantation and police control of slaves. The chapters on punishments and rewards, fugitives, buying, selling and hiring are particularly interesting. The profitableness of slavery is shown to have been not always so profitable, while the efforts of the Mississippi Colonization Society is looked into. The book has an adequate bibliography (although several useful titles are not noticed, but this is made up for by a number of original manuscripts) and a satisfactory index.

The book is so coldly analytical and so impartially factual that one is forced frequently and warmly to call on one's imagination properly to visualize all that the text is meant to convey. It deals with facts bluntly and unemotionally—which is all to its credit. Yet, unfortunately, the facts dealt with men and women, not with

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# Next Week

**BRYANITES AND BONDHOLDERS, by George McCabe, declares: "The federal administration has had to deal with monetary problems more serious than outmoded bimetalism, since they set out last spring to accomplish two mutually exclusive objectives: a higher price level and the unfreezing of the security markets. To stop the disastrous decline in the general price level was the more important. As everyone knows by this time, the effort in that direction was an immediate success. . . . This served to unsettle the already demoralized bond market. . . . Another and more reasonable step has been taken, viz., stabilizing the value of the dollar to relieve the investor of the fear of inflation. The favorable reaction in the bond market has been spectacular." Thus, only briefly this column is able to suggest some of the amazing manipulations in financial matters which our government is carrying on, that are analyzed and constructively criticized in the interest of the greatest good of the greatest number of our American citizens in Mr. McCabe's brilliant article. . . . THE TRUTH IS NOT ENOUGH, by T. Swann Harding, the author of "T.N.T.," "The Degradation of Science," and other books, reveals what is being attempted in the public's behalf and in behalf of honest business by the present bill before Congress for an extension of the Food and Drugs Act to prevent not only false, but also misleading, statements in advertising and on labels. . . . MARYLAND'S GLORY, OUR GAIN, by J. Elliot Ross, is an admirably clear and documented paper on the contribution of the Free State to the principle of religious freedom in the United States. . . . THE LOCH BOAT, by L. A. G. Strong, is a wholly delightful, anecdotal sketch by one of our most appreciated modern stylists and story-tellers.**

mules and machines. Human souls looked out with pleading eyes as the slave-driver's whip seared scars into sinews; human hearts were broken as the auctioneer's hammer smashed family ties upon the slave block; moral minds were in those black women who taught their children to hate the white blood which violence so often sent surging through black veins. Slavery's stinging lash may have left livid scars upon the backs of black servants, but it left awful marks upon the souls of white masters. Soul scars are the crueller heritage.

Unfortunately, Dr. Sydnor fails to capitalize the word "Negro" and thus leaves himself open to the suspicion of being either ignorant or prejudiced; ignorant of the fact that orthography demands a capital letter for Negro just the same as it does for Irish, Nordic, Ethiopian, Protestant, etc.; prejudiced because the idea in back of failure to capitalize the word is one of assumed inferority of and open contempt for the Negro. Yet in other matters the author is so impartial and learned that one would hesitate to accuse him of being either prejudiced or ignorant —it is unfortunate, however, to say the very least.

JOHN T. GILLARD.

## Vermont Lives

*Bonfire, by Dorothy Canfield. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.50.*

THERE are few authors who know any locality as Mrs. Dorothy Canfield Fisher knows Vermont. There are few, too, who love a section of the country as she obviously loves the Green Mountains. Perhaps, indeed, in this knowledge and this love lies the root of the inescapable feeling one has that she is more interested in her land and its people than in anything which happens to them. And this conviction in spite of the fact that in "Bonfire" she is writing a novel especially strong in plot motivation and dramatic incident.

Nor is her plot weakened by what consistently seems to be her major interest. The movement is steady and rapid; not the most demanding reader could for a moment accuse her of padding or of slowing-up. The motif of the story is irony, that irony which is seen in the bitter and tragic consequences of an act in itself good and noble. These consequences sweep like a conflagration through the village of Clifford and leave hardly an actor in the drama untouched—the district nurse who all unwittingly starts the fire, the young doctor who is severely burned by it, the middle-aged village esthete who completely falls before it, the rector of the parish who has cause to bless it. Interest in the story never for a moment flags; and yet the initial impression remains throughout, namely, that the people themselves are uppermost in the author's mind.

And that, moreover, they are uppermost as types of village life rather than as individuals. All of them live and move and have their being, to be sure, and many of them most convincingly. And yet to one who knows another portion of New England they do seem to typify rather than to individualize. There is the deaf maiden sister; the confirmed and somewhat malicious gossip who is tolerated by her neighbors because of an inherited

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"queer streak"; the old mountaineer with his dog and somewhat usual quaint philosophy; the retired, rather effeminate gentleman with a fondness for antiques; the teacher of Latin and mathematics in the academy who has a bad figure and who loves the district nurse with restrained passion; the "summer people" all cut to form. The natives speak with a generous sprinkling of savory Vermont turns of phrase and with an equally generous use of mannerisms. They do not lure one toward them as persons but as types.

And the queer thing is that they do lure. It is quite impossible not to be interested in them, even although the interest holds very little surprise. They are like people in home letters and on Sunday-school picnics, when such antiquated forms of amusement were still in fashion. One likes them as one likes old, familiar clothes and foods one has come to expect on certain days. And the troubles they endure seem not the less like troubles because they are taken as we knew all along they would be, given themselves.

Hence, although the book on the face of it would seem to be made up of incompatible elements, a strong plot full of action and drama and a group of persons who are not so much people as they are types, one is conscious of no incongruity at all. Perhaps the author's sureness of touch explains this, a sureness born of knowledge and affection. At times, at least to one reader, the affection is not free from sentimentality which now and again weakens a dialogue, loosens a good scene, damages an effect. Nevertheless, it will be a long time before Clifford, Vermont, fades from the mind of even a cursory reader.

MARY ELLEN CHASE.

## Washington the Man

*The Private Affairs of George Washington, by Stephen Decatur, Jr. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. $5.00.*

NO—IT is not. It has nothing to do with Henry VIII. I do not even suppose that Mr. Decatur chose his title himself. Publishers whose minds run that way do it to make a book sell. This one did not need it, for it is good in itself. It is a picture of the sort of person whose existence as an American product a good many of us do not like to admit: a great nobleman. The picture is drawn from his "private affairs" as set down by Washington's private secretary in his account books and in his dealings with his house servants and purveyors. That is likely to be an excellent way to get a good understanding of a man. Perhaps that is why people burn their unofficial papers. I once, most indiscreetly, plucked from the burning a package of letters from Mme. de Stael to an eminent Philadelphian—very compromising—but adding greatly to understanding of that lively lady.

These meticulous details of daily life add greatly to understanding of George Washington. And yet they may be dangerous, for they may only serve to add to the mythology growing about him, instead of showing him forth for what he really was: not an exception, nor an isolated phenomenon, unique in his generation, but the

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flowering of a breed and class of men, bearing an old tradition into a new land, and in so doing, making the beginnings of a new race.

Let it be so, that he stood head and shoulders above many of his kind. The young men about him, who were of his own breed, testify that it was so, equally with others whom his presence intimidated—equally with his servants and slaves who did not fear him. That does not make him an Olympian Father of the Gods. The more he is studied from his own ordinary daily life, the more clearly it stands out that he was not the "poor farmer's barefoot son" risen to great eminence, nor some freakish prodigy of nature, nor the divinely inspired prophet sent to save a chosen people out of Egyptian bondage.

WILLIAM FRANKLIN SANDS.

## Pioneer Romantic

*Alfred de Vigny, by Arnold Whitridge. New York: Oxford University Press. $2.50.*

QUIET people whose principal hobby is literature will find Professor Whitridge's life of de Vigny wholly delightful, amusing and liberally strewn with plums of some substantiality. It is a confection somewhat in the style of André Maurois's "Ariel," that is, brief, witty and objective. It argues no disputed points nor seeks to prove any formidable absolutes; it does, after one winds into it a way, re-create the figure of a living human being against the particular incidents of his times. Of course de Vigny was literarily an interesting and important figure, and the art in this life lies in that implicitly from the facts, some enduring universalities of human nature do spring to mind without being obscured by hand signs.

He was the leader, or at least among the first, of the romantics. In our times we have seen the decadence of romanticism, and even of so-called realism, and a good deal of unintelligent or scantily informed punditing against all romanticism. Like most "movements," romanticism had a cause and its aims originally were altogether plausible and worth while. The decadence of classicism into which French literature had fallen in the latter part of the eighteenth century that narrowly confined all literature in a few rigid forms and exacted an "elegance of expression" which had become an empty convention, that required the translation of Shakespeare's characterful speeches into rhymed, heroic alexandrines wholly without character and suppressed the grave diggers' lines in Hamlet as vulgar, is something ignored by those who now sigh for classicism without making themselves clear. This suggests a glittering example of the pitfalls of talking in absolutes about matters unworthy of such final definition. De Vigny's literary history, coupled with that of his friends and acquaintances, Victor Hugo, Dumas, Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve, Delacroix, in France, Heine, in Germany, and Sir Walter Scott, in England, and in its late stages when the romantic formula began to decay, De Musset and Baudelaire, is a history of assaults and alarums, of redoubts taken and new land won in the realm of *belles-lettres*. To the

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participants, it was terribly important, and they bled and died for their causes; with the advantage of our perspective, through the clear and benevolent eyes of Professor Whitridge, it is a cloak and pen drama that is not farce but legitimate, high comedy in which the actors are real personages who have left us a valuable heritage by their lives. For the literary—let me repeat the qualifying warning—the performance is wholly satisfactory and has its moments of quite thrilling virtuosity.

FREDERIC THOMPSON.

## Unprejudiced Recollections

*The Beginning of a Mortal, by Max Miller. Illustrated by John Sloane. New York: E. P. Dutton Company. $2.50.*

IN A COLLECTION of some dozen fragments from the memories of childhood the author of "I Cover the Waterfront" has produced a volume which, though textually slender, possesses an almost epic flavor. Told with the same vigor and economy of decoration noteworthy in Mr. Miller's account of his life as a reporter, these oddments of recollection have a nostalgic appeal for anyone for whom the earliest years of mortality still possess a significance; and though they are specfically localized in the country around Puget Sound and later the Montana prairies, they tell the story of American boyhood everywhere.

The first of these deftly made sketches is the story of Slats, the oldest—and consequently the tyrant—of the little group of boys in the mill town where the author begins his memories. Slats longs for the time when he will go to work and begin to live his own life. He fills the minds of his younger companions with lively details of the things he will do, and with intimations of other things they cannot understand. But symbolic of all his ambitions is a pair of yellow gloves. The achievement of these and the part they play in the moving dénouement is vivid and dramatic narrative.

There is fine portraiture in the descriptions of the tramp who comes to swim with the boys and turns out to be a human being like anyone else—only infinitely more attractive because he understands things grown people can't; the old woman from the shanty-boat whose devious methods of making a living lead her periodically into the toils of the law; the ex-banker encountered on the way to the penitentiary—and others. They are all seen objectively, innocent of correlation with other human experience, as a child sees personalities. This evocation of early impressions as they were actually received with no interpretive shadings from the reflections of maturity give the book a singular freshness. Throughout it is the child's point of view, sometimes darkly wondering, sometimes subtly illuminated, again passively accepting, which the author strives to present.

A further attraction of the volume are the very literal drawings of John Sloane whose fearlessness of detail is as engaging as the author's own feeling for the simple facts alone.

FRANK WOLLENCOTT BARNES.


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# Briefer Mention

*Authors Today and Yesterday; edited by Stanley J. Kunitz. New York: The H. W. Wilson Company. $5.00.*

THIS is an encyclopedia of contributors to the world literature of the twentieth century, and with its companion volume, "Living Authors," published in 1931, makes an excellent reference work on the subject. Many of the writers have contributed short autobiographies and others have supplied information. Each of the biographies is accompanied by a portrait and a bibliography. To a person interested in contemporary and recent literature the book is fascinating. The two books would be useful in almost any library. Perhaps an American Catholic might regret that some of the writers familiar to him and by the suffrage of their readers quite as entitled to mention as others who may be found in the book, are not mentioned. As regards strictly secular literature, however, the book is extraordinarily complete.

*A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics, by the Earl of Listowel. London: George Allen and Unwin. 10s. 6d.*

THE PRINCE OF DENMARK is here not simply left out; there is no whispered aside, even, suggesting his having been. Nietzsche, Hulme, Maritain, the whole scholastic movement, are ignored; Santayana and I. A. Richards are given the short treatment of minor figures; the valuable doctrine of synaesthesis is given nine lines. These examples exhaust not the list of incredible omission but, I suspect, the patience of any informed possible reader. What the book does contain is divisible into the historical (usually true, but innocent of dates and of all effort toward unity) and the "critical" (sometimes common sense, always banal). The historical part may be useful to beginning students. But they must read it with guidance. Since the book is a London University thesis, one is free to feel that more guidance should have attended its writing.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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